



“The Basset Hound possesses in marked degree those characteristics which equip it to admirably follow a trail over and through difficult terrain.” from *The Basset Hound Illustrated Standard*. This first sentence from *The Official AKC Standard for the Basset Hound* is gospel as far as we promoters of Hunting Performance Testing are concerned. The wording implies the right conformation as well as the right “nose” to excel as a hunter.

Basset hound owners have for years been split between those who show, and those who field trial, with few Bassets ever crossing the line. Now, and for the last several years, a group of us have been working to demonstrate that the Standard defines a capable hunter, and are promoting the convergence of conformation and nose (show and field). This has already resulted in many dual champions.

Hunting Performance Testing is new within the last twenty years, and is an ideal way for all basset hounds to have a chance to demonstrate and grow their hunting ability, as well as have the best of fun.

Without getting involved in all the details, the Hunting Performance Test involves a hound running in a multi-acre enclosure for a half-hour with a handler. The stake can be solo, brace, or dual-brace – with the choice and

brace-mates up to the owner/handler. No experience necessary by handler or hound.

The game can be cottontail rabbits or hare, with rabbits being typical. The hounds follow the rabbit scent-line, usually never seeing the rabbit, and the music they make with their baying makes us handlers swell with pride. Since rabbits are on every predators’ menu, those in the club enclosure generally have a longer life span than in the “wild.” The beagle clubs where we have our events go to lengths to provide a protective environment, and remove predators. In short, our bassets are no significant threat to the much swifter rabbits.

On June 15 though June 17, 2018 the Pilgrim Basset Hound Club, together with the Capital District Basset Hound Club, conducted three back-to-back Hunting Performance Tests at the Niagara River Beagle Club in Alexander, NY.

Our super friendly host at Niagara River Beagle Club is their Vice-President, Wayne Smith, but the real credit goes to his wife Maria who was assisted in the kitchen by Valerie Dolan. Three meals (which are better described as feasts) on Friday and Saturday, and two on Sunday, left me wondering if I keep going to Niagara River Beagle Club for the running of hounds, or the meals.

The header photograph was a snap shot from a video mounted on FC Millview Harold’s back, in an attempt to see the sport from the Basset’s perspective.

If this article sparks your interest in participating in a Hunting Performance Test, contact Carol Makowski, the Hunting Performance Test Chairperson – bristleconeassets@yahoo.com

In terms of entries and results, the Hunting Performance Tests were a great success. Although, at times, the weather was hot and humid, there was plenty of shade and a nice breeze. Thanks to Melissa Phelps (who also did some judging as well as entering three hounds each day) for setting up a wading pool for the bassets to use before heading out to find and pursue rabbits.

Following is a summary of results:

Date	6/15	6/16	6/17
Sponsor	PBHC	CDBHC	PBHC
Entries	29	31	30
Qualifiers	8	13	13

For a number of the qualifiers, passing their stakes represented a title achievement (three qualifications are required in each stake to progress to the next title). Since the titles earned are now recognized by the AKC, the owners and hounds have more reason to be proud – well, maybe not the hounds since they just want to have fun – which they did with or without qualifying.

All events are just plain exciting to observe. The Hunting Performance Test is a measure of performance only, not a competitive event. This means that all of the gallery is rooting for all of the hounds. The handlers get to spend many hours together, and strong friendships develop. Everyone keeps involved and busy, from helping handle and catch hounds, to volunteering to judge and beat brush or spotting for rabbits.

Although all stakes are a delight to observe, the dual-brace, or pack of four, can be the most entertaining. In case you are thinking that “this all sounds like fun, but my basset will be an embarrassment”, the photo below documents Miriam Tefts experience when she entered her puppy pack for the first time.



To make the objective clear, the goal is to find a recent scent line for a rabbit, not to find something smelly in which to roll.

Another foursome, with a little more experience, was made up of Truffles and three of her kids (Bitsy, Razyzy and Charlie). The judges were Cheryl Long and Mike Arruda. In the photo below Cheryl is observing the pack in full hunt mode.



Cheryl is an experienced field trial participant and was introduced to the Hunt Test by being pressed into judging at the Nationals in St. Louis. She has been at Niagara River Beagle Club several times for field trials, but this was the first time she entered her bassets in a Hunt Test. As a measure of how enjoyable and rewarding the Hunt Test experience is, Cheryl drove all the way from the Dayton area to be part of the events, and is making plans to try to set up a Hunt Test in Ohio.

Another long-distance participant was Ellen Ripper, who traveled from her home close to Fredericksburg, VA. Ellen has been a huge supporter of the event having organized several very successful Hunt Tests at the Battlefield Beagle Club in Locust Grove, VA.

Below are Truffles and her kids after a very exciting and exhausting pack run.

