

2026-2027 Squirrel Hunt Rules



Ultimate Squirrel Dog Club LLC

205 Todd Ridge Corbin Ky,40701

Contents

SECTION 1 – Definitions
SECTION 2 – General Information
SECTION 3 – Scoring The Tree
SECTION 4 – Questions
SECTION 5 – Disciplinary Reports
SECTION 6 – Handler
SECTION 7 – Dogs
SECTION 8 – Points System
SECTION 9 – Points will Be Plus
SECTION 10 – Points will be Minus
SECTION 11 - Circle Points
SECTION 12 – Points will Be Deleted
SECTION 13 – Dogs will Be Scratched
SECTION 14 – Time Out
SECTION 15 – Ties
SECTION 16 – Entry Refusal
SECTION 17 – Cast Winners
SECTION 18 – Order of Placement
SECTION 19 – Drawing of Casts
SECTION 20 – Good Judgement Rule
SECTION 21 – Cell Phones
SECTION 22 – Reserving Entries
SECTION 23 – Degree of Champions

2026-2027 SQUIRREL HUNT RULES

SECTION 1: Definitions

a. Ultimate Squirrel Dog Club LLC (USDC): Will approve all events, keep record of winnings, issue championship degrees, and World Champion qualification. USDC will not be responsible for accounting for and disbursing of winnings, appointing judges, or determining event winners. USDC reserves the right to withhold recognition of winners and may decline to grant a club permission to hold events at their sole discretion.

b. Host Club: A club hosting an event with the permission of the USDC. The host club will have complete authority to conduct events, determine winners, and distribute awards. The club will appoint a certified Hunt Director who will have full authority over the event. The club will rule on all questions concerning an event, including rule interpretation.

c. Hunt Director: The Hunt director will be responsible for selecting judges, guides, and conducting events. USDC shall have the authority to correct gross errors by Hunt Directors at its discretion. Hunt Director is responsible for sending all Hunt reports, Registration forms, Membership forms and Fees to USDC within 7 days of event.

d. Guide: The guide must be a responsible person who can keep the cast in the best possible hunting areas. The location where they are taken should provide a safe environment for the dogs to compete and allow the cast to hunt for the full 90 minutes whenever possible. At no time should the guide leave the cast before the hunt is completed. The guide is expected to remain with the cast for the entire duration of the hunt and assist in ensuring a fair, safe, and successful event for all participants.

e. Judge: The Hunt Director will select a judge for each cast from among the entries he feels are most qualified to conduct the cast. He should have a good knowledge of the sport and the ability to honestly conduct the cast according to USDC rules. The judge will have complete control of the cast and will make all decisions. The judge will be responsible for carrying the scorecard and accurately recording the scores on the card. Any judge found to have scored any situation to the benefit of any individual or dog shall be subject to disciplinary action.

f. Non-Hunting Judge: USDC Major Hunt Finals Judging Format

A non-hunting judge will be used only in the finals of all major USDC hunts. A three-person panel will also be assigned to the cast. The non-hunting judge will make all scoring and rule interpretation decisions during the cast. If a handler disagrees with a call made by the non-hunting judge, they may place a question on the call and have the three-person panel assigned to that cast vote / rule on the call. To be eligible, the non-hunting judge and all three panel members must be current USDC members in good standing. This format is intended to provide fair, consistent, and impartial judging during the finals of all major USDC events.

SECTION 2: General Information

A. Hold Harmless Clause: By entering a USDC event, you agree to hold USDC, the host club, judge, guide, and Hunt Director harmless in the event of accident, error, or misapplication of the rules. Any owner or handler may file a written complaint concerning the actions of the sponsoring club. USDC will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action including, but not limited to withholding recognition of winners, and/or refusing to approve the club for future events.

B. Hunting Time: All cast members will hunt for ninety (90) minutes, except for the final cast where all cast members must agree to hunt for only one (1) hour. Only (1) one member requesting to hunt (90) minutes is necessary. All events with over three (3) casts must hunt ninety (90) minutes in the first round to be considered for placement.

C. Time Keeping: Judges should ensure that all time keeping is accurate and that all cast members are informed concerning all time. **Judges' time clock is the time that the hunt runs by.**

D. Call Acknowledgement: The judge should acknowledge a handler's call by responding to the dog's name and number of points received for the call.

E. Staying Within Hearing Distance: When the dogs are turned loose, the cast is to walk slowly in the direction the guide wishes to hunt. The cast will make every effort to remain within hearing distance of all dogs. **Every effort should be made to split the distance between all dogs. When a Hunting Judge or Non-Hunting Judge requests to see a handler's Garmin handheld to determine the distance between dogs for scoring purposes, all handlers whose dogs are involved Will be required to show their handhelds to the Judge and the entire cast. This allows all cast members to verify the location and distance of each dog so the Judge can make an informed and fair ruling based on the information available to everyone.**

If they are unable to keep all dogs within hearing range, the judge may apply the time out rule if all handlers agree or by Non-hunting Judge or non-hunting guide. The cast should always stay as close to the dogs as possible.

F. Cast Should Stay Together: Cast is to always stay together except for when dogs are split and hunting judges are in use, a handler will be allowed to go to the tree and leash his/her dog provided there is not a search time running. There is no need to return to the other dog's tree for scoring. There MUST be two handlers to score a tree. If the two handlers disagree on seeing the squirrel, the third handler will be asked to come back to score the tree. If there is a non-hunting judge, a handler will be instructed to handle their dog (even during search time) and will not need to return to the other dog's tree for scoring unless otherwise instructed by the judge.

G. Cast Should Walk into Tree Together: All Cast Members will go to the tree together to determine if all dogs called treed are treeing. Every effort should be made to allow Judge to reach the tree first. Dogs declared treed must be showing tree. **Looking up and/or barking up is showing treed.** If a dog declared treed is not showing treed, the judge shall allow 15 seconds for it to show treed, or it is minus. (The judge must announce when the 15 seconds have started) If the dog does not show treed within the 15

seconds, it shall be minus. If the dog was over 10 steps (30 feet) from the tree shown it shall be minus. A dog may Timber (Run with head up) 60' without squirrel being seen. If dog goes over 60' Timbering (run with head up) and no squirrel is seen dog will be minus.

H. Number of Cast Members: All cast members must sign scorecard certifying it to be accurate. No handler can be considered for placement in the event if his scorecard has not been certified by signatures of all handlers on the cast.

I. If More than One Dog is Scratched: Any time more than one dog is scratched from a cast at the same time, they will place in the order of the score at the time they were scratched. No dog scratched for fighting may advance as a cast winner.

J. Muzzles: No dog will be allowed to compete wearing a muzzle during a cast.

K. Abuse of Dogs: Abuse of any kind shall not be tolerated while participating in any USDC event, including time outs. **Minus -125 First Offence**, Scratched on second Offence.

L. Awards / Final Cast Options: A deadline will be announced and noted on the scorecard for the final cast to be back at the club house. Finalists will be the last three (3) or top (2) two cast winners who have not been eliminated. Any finalist's dog not on the grounds to answer roll call will be scratched from the final cast and will receive last place in the final cast. If the final is split, the finalist that is not present will also receive 3rd Place of the awards. If all members of the final cast agree, awards will be divided (split) equally. Only one (1) finalist vote is needed to hunt for it all. Where final cast has agreed to split the awards, the final cast can hunt for placement and Dog of the Year points or split Dog of the Year points.

SECTION 3: Scoring The Tree

A. Tree Points Structure: Tree points awarded will be 1st-125, 2nd-50, 3rd-25.

B. Barking Requirement: A dog must bark to be declared treed.

C. Approaching the Tree: When dogs are declared treed, **the cast must stand for 1 minute to give an opportunity for any other dog to be treed. After the 1 minute the cast may move at a moderate pace** close enough to see dogs working, but not closer than sixty (60) feet from the declared tree. Cast must wait two (2) minutes after dog(s) are declared treed before going to the tree, unless all dogs are declared treed or hunt time expires.

D. Recast Rules: a. After the scoring of a tree, there shall be a thirty (30) second walk before dogs can be recast unless all dogs are handled at the tree and are recast together. The walk time shall be started immediately following the scoring of a tree. A dog may be cut any time after thirty (30) seconds provided that all dogs are not declared treed or handled. **If Dog is cut before 30 seconds -125 will be issued. And handlers cannot retrieve their dog until he has been declared treed.** (1 dog must be hunting and not declared treed) Dogs must be cut no later than sixty (60) seconds. **If dog/or dogs are not recut after 60 secs. Dogs will receive -125 points.**

b. If a dog is declared treed before a handled dog is recast, the dog that was recast cannot receive any points for the tree in which the declared dog is treed on. If the dog that was recast trees within that dog's search area, points are to be deleted.

C. If 10 minutes or less is remaining in a 90-minute cast or 5 minutes or less is remaining in a 60-minute cast, a handler may leash his/her dog for the time remaining unless the 3-minute continuous barking rule is invoked. The handler must announce this to the Non-Hunting Judge or cast members and may not recast the dog for the duration of the cast.

E. One Minute Rule: When a dog is declared treed, tree points will remain open for one minute. All handlers must stand still for one minute and give the other handlers the opportunity to tree their dogs. If a handler leaves the cast before one minute -125 will be awarded to the handler on the first offense and scratched on the second offence. All dogs declared treed after 30 seconds and before one minute will receive points. At one minute the tree points are closed, and no other dog(s) may receive points for that tree. Dogs that are declared treed within the first minute must hold the tree until the two minutes expire unless all dogs are declared treed / handled or hunt time expires.

F. Search Time: After arriving at the tree and handling the dogs, up to five (5) minutes will be allowed to search the declared tree and other trees within sixty (60) feet of the tree that the squirrel could have timbered to. The full five minutes does not have to be used if handlers agree on the scoring. These five (5) minutes will be allowed even if the hunt time has expired. All cast members will score the tree unless non-hunting judges are used for each cast member.

G. Split Trees: a. Dogs will be awarded split tree points when dogs are treed more than 60 feet from base to base 2' up on tree. If dogs' trees are within the 60 ft. area and more than one squirrel is found, the second squirrel must be seen in the actual tree that the second dog is treed on for the dog to receive split tree points. This can occur only after the first dog's squirrel is found for them both to receive plus points.

b. Dogs treeing on split trees within the 60 ft. area will be scored as one tree when only one squirrel is seen in the 60 ft. area.

c. When a split tree is determined, and the search areas overlap, a dog shall not receive plus points for a squirrel found within the 20 step (60 feet) search area of a tree that has already been searched and scored unless plus points were awarded to the dog(s) declared treed and a second squirrel is found. A scored tree and its search area can only be scored once per cast. The second dog treed search area will be shortened if it overlaps with first dog treed. (Example: Dog A first dog tree gets a 60' circle around his tree and that is Dog A search area. If Dog B is treed 65' from dog A, he will have 5' on one side of his tree to search and 60' circle on other side. Anytime the search area goes into an already searched area you cannot score that area again. Anytime a squirrel is found on the 60' Line the squirrel goes to the first dog treed if it was found in the 5-minute search time.)

d. In a two-dog cast 2nd dog treed cannot go handle his dog until first dog treed search time is over, unless there is a non-hunting judge.

H. Returning to Previously Scored Tree: Dogs returning to previously scored tree and handled the Second time dog will receive 125 minus points. If dog is handled Third time on the same tree dog will be scratched. (Previously scored tree is the 60ft search area)

I. Interference Prevention: Dog(s) coming into 60' search area of closed tree shall be tied to prevent interference with tree dog(s).

J. Non-Squirrel / Tree Game Rules: A dog will be recast after scoring tree and 30 seconds walk unless all dogs are declared treed. Dog(s) treeing 'tree game' other than squirrel will be led away with points deleted. Any tree game will be deleted unless it is a gray squirrel or fox squirrel. Tree game must be in the tree dog is treed on to be deleted. If not in tree dog is treed on dog will have 60' search area unless it has already been scored on during hunt time. 'Tree game' will be defined as follows: any animal capable of climbing shall be considered 'tree game', including Flying Squirrels, Ground Squirrels and Cats. Any type of fowl should not be considered as 'tree game'. If dog(s) were declared treed on scorecard and only large fowl is seen, delete points.

K. Tree Beating Restrictions: Beating on Trees No Ball Bats Allowed, no cutting trees or tree limbs to beat trees with, you can only use what you find in the woods. Water bottles are allowed, pulling vines, etc. will be allowed once the search time begins where allowed by law. If another dog comes into the 60' Search area it will be handled.

L. Den / Hole Tampering: No running sticks, rocks or any object inside splits, cracks, den or any hole in a tree. Minus 125 for the first offence, scratched on the 2nd offence.

M. Handling Sequential Trees: When the 3rd dog is treed the handler CAN NOT go handle their dog until search time is up on the 1st dog treed or 1st dog treed handler says he is satisfied.

N. Out of Sight Treeing: When dogs are out of sight and declared treed, if the dog that is called first leaves the tree before the cast arrives to determine if they were split, tree points shall be awarded for the tree position in which they were called.

SECTION 4: Questions & Appeals

A. Question Placement & Deposit: Any handler has the right to question the scoring of any dog in the cast. Questions must be placed on the card at the time the dog is scored or should be scored. Questions must be submitted to non-hunting judge or the remaining cast members and resolved by a majority vote. If a handler is dissatisfied with the majority decision, that decision may be appealed to the Hunt Director to be heard after the cast is finished by placing a deposit of \$25. The deposit must be placed with the judge in the woods at the time of the question. The deposit will not be refunded later in the cast if the handler changes his mind. However, the handler may choose to drop the question and forfeit

the deposit at the end of the cast. Handler may sign an IOU on the back of the scorecard. If IOU is not paid, the handler is automatically suspended from entering other events until the question fee is paid. No deposit is required when the cast has voted but does not have a majority.

B. Question Presentation: A cast should not return to the clubhouse to have a question heard until **Handlers must be given the opportunity to address the panel.** hunting time is completed, unless the question pertains to a dog or handler being scratched from the cast.

C. Panel Hearing: The Hunt Director will assemble a panel of three qualified people to hear the question. If the panel finds in favor of the question, the deposit will be returned, and the scorecard changed to reflect the change. If the panel finds the question, the deposit will be forfeited with half going to the club and half going to USDC.

D. Panel Appeal: Any cast member, who believes a panel had made a gross misapplication of a rule, may request an appeal of the panel's decision, if and only if, he can quote the specific rule violation to the Hunt Director or USDC Representative immediately following the rendering of the panel's decision. Members will be charged a \$100 deposit for all panel appeal requests, which must be paid at the time of each request. When and only when an appeal panel overturns the original panel's decision, will the appeal deposit be returned.

SECTION 5: Disciplinary Reports

Misconduct Reporting: Any handler may be reported to the Hunt Director by another cast member, Judge, Guide, or club member for misconduct. The Hunt Director will send report to USDC with other hunt results. Misconduct report will be handled by USDC. Issue will be investigated, and charges may be brought on others involved as well as member charged.

SECTION 6: Handler Rules & Conduct

A. Membership Requirement: Must be a current member of USDC and be in good standing. It is the handler's responsibility to know the rules contained herein and agree to abide by them. The handler also agrees to accept and abide by the decision of the Judge and Master of Dogs.

B. Handler Conduct: A handler must conduct himself as a gentleman and sportsman at all times. A handler becoming loud, aggressive, or belligerent may be scratched by majority of cast, non-hunting Judge or hunt Director regardless of the merit of his argument. A handler displaying unsportsmanlike conduct or failing to abide by these rules should be reported to the Hunt Director for a disciplinary hearing. The disciplinary committee may fine, place on probation, or suspend any member.

C. Handler Interference: Any handler found guilty of interfering with another handler's dog in any way that would affect his ability to compete may be subject to disciplinary action.

D. Disciplining of Dogs: A handler may not scold, encourage, or punish his dog during the cast. 125 Minus on first offence, Scratched on second offence.

E. Handler Leaving Cast / Lost Dog Time: A handler may not leave the cast for any reason. The judge may give a handler permission to leave the cast to search for his dog during a time out. Handler will have 45 minutes to retrieve his dog and meet at designated location. Any handler or dog delaying a cast for more than 45 minutes will be scratched.

F. Inspection of Scorecard: A handler may inspect the scorecard at any time, provided Judge is not in the process of scoring dogs.

G. Spectator Participation: The local host club will decide if Spectators will be allowed on casts. A 2/3 majority of individual cast members may vote to have No Spectators on their cast. A maximum of 2 Spectators per cast member will be allowed.

Handlers are fully responsible for the Location and Conduct of their Spectator. Spectators must remain with the majority of cast under hunting judges & always stay with non-hunting judges. Spectators may assist in locating squirrels; they will inform the majority of cast or non-hunting judges. If a Spectator shakes, pulls vines, beats onto a tree, they must do so for all cast members when asked.

Any Spectator having verbal misconduct or becomes separated (out of sight or hearing) from majority of cast or non-hunting judge: Handler responsible for them will receive 125 minus first offence and scratched second offense.

Spectators are not allowed to be in possession of a handheld device capable of tracking dogs during cast. Spectators may not use cell phones for any reason during cast.

The USDC reserves the right to insert a USDC official onto any cast. USDC has the right to include Play x Play person or Live feed person to any cast to benefit USDC promotions.

H. Scorecard Certification: Each handler is responsible for the honesty of the scorecard and will sign the scorecard certifying it upon completion of the cast. Any handler who feels the scorecard is not accurate should question the card. Once the card is signed, the handler is certifying that the card is correct at the time of signing. If a question is placed on the card, the handler can wait until panel hearing to sign card. Panel members can certify a scorecard upon the panel's decision.

I. Remaining with Cast: Each handler is required to remain with the cast for the entire duration of the hunt, even their dog is no longer participating in the cast, The only exception is when the handler wants to withdraw it is determined that the handler's dog may be in danger or at risk of harm from proof of handheld device. In such cases, the majority vote of the cast will determine whether the handler may leave the cast to retrieve or protect their dog, or whether they must remain with the cast until the hunt is completed. or he will be subject to disciplinary charges. -125 first offense, scratched the second offense.

J. Signature Requirement: Any cast considered for placement in an event must have the signature of all cast members certifying it to be accurate. All casts must be completed with at least three (3) members to certify scorecards (In case of two dog cast, both handlers must sign the card to certify its accuracy.) The Hunt Director may sign card on behalf of a handler if a question is brought before the panel. Hunt Director may also sign on behalf of any handler who has not signed scorecard due to negligence.

K. Signing Fraudulent Scorecard: Any handler found to have signed a fraudulent scorecard may be suspended from all USDC events and potentially barred for life from registering dogs.

L. Undeserved Credit: Anyone found guilty of accepting credit for a different amount than he earned in a USDC event may be subject to disciplinary action.

M. Intentional Mishandling: A handler must compete to the best of his and his dog's ability. Any handler intentionally handling his dog in such a way as to allow another dog or handler to win may be subject to

N. Dog Withdrawn by Handler: No handler may withdraw their dog without first handling it, unless all cast members and judge unanimously agree and give permission. If any cast member objects to the dog being withdrawn, he/she must state a legitimate reason as to how it could negatively affect the outcome of the cast. Handler(s) objecting for an invalid reason may be subject to disciplinary action.

SECTION 7: Dogs

A. Performance Requirement: Any dog entered must be able to participate without hindering other dogs in the cast. -125 first offence, Scratched second offence.

B. Registration & Ownership: The dog must be USDC registered in the true owner's name. All awards will be presented to the registered owner of the dog. Provided owners are paid members for that hunting year.

C. Fraudulent Entry: Anyone guilty of falsely registering or falsely entering any dog with incorrect papers may be scratched, fined, and/or placed on suspension and/or probation.

D. Veterinary Examination: The handler must allow his dog to be examined by a veterinarian, if requested by hunt Director or be permanently suspended.

E. Tracking & Training Systems: Tracking Receiver/Transmitter (handhelds) paired with collars that cannot produce any type of tone, vibration or electronic stimulation may be powered on and used at all times. Audio alerts on tracking receivers (handhelds) must be muted. Tracking Receiver/Transmitter (handhelds) paired with collars that can produce any type of tone or electronic stimulation may not be powered on, or used by handler, their spectator or anyone else on the cast or at the truck during hunting time.

Tracking System Use during the cast is intended for the personal use of the handler and the safety of the handlers' dog only. No information obtained from tracking devices will be permitted for use in scoring situations in the woods or at panel question hearings. As always, dog must be heard before handler, majority of cast or non-hunting Judge can take a tree call and all time-out requirements in rule still apply.

Handlers must agree to allow the Judge to check their tracking system for any electronic stimulation, vibration, or tone capability at any time requested. Anyone found to have modified tracking or training equipment to disguise electronic tone, or stimulation capability will be scratched. These rules are to be strictly enforced. Any time a handler is scratched for tracking equipment infractions; misconduct charges

must be reported to the BOD's. Any handler that tampers, modifies or uses tracking collars to cheat will be suspended on the first offense and suspended for life on the second.

SECTION 8: Points System Summary

A. Tree Points Grid: 125 points for 1st tree, 50 pts. For 2nd, 25 for 3rd tree.

B. Barking Requirement: A dog must bark to be declared treed.

C. One Minute Rule Application: When a dog is declared treed, tree points will remain open for 1 minute. All dogs declared treed after 30 seconds and before 1 minute will receive 25 points. At 1 minute the tree points are closed, and no other dog(s) may receive points for that tree. Dogs that are declared treed within the first minute must hold the tree until the 2 minutes expire unless all dogs are declared treed / handled or hunt time expires.

D. Treed on Closed Tree: Any dog declared treed after a tree is closed must receive 125 points. If the dog is treeing on closed tree, tree points will be deleted.

E. Separate Tree: The Handler should not call treed for a separate tree. The Judge should award separate tree points as soon as he is sure the dog(s) is/are on separate tree.

F. Movement Verification: Judges will pay close attention to the location of dogs called treed to be sure the dogs do not move. If in doubt as to whether the dog is moving, it is best to hold the cast in place to watch for movement.

G. Arrival at Scored Tree: Any dog coming into the 60' search area that is being scored will be handled.

SECTION 9: Points Will Be Plus

A. Verified Sightings: When a dog trees, and a squirrel (excluding flying and ground squirrels) is seen by a non-hunting judge or majority of the cast.

B. Timbering / Ground Restrictions: Dog(s) declared treed may receive plus points for a timbering squirrel or a squirrel on the ground only if squirrel is seen within the 60' search area. Dogs will not be plussed for a squirrel timbering or running into the 60' search area.

C. Location Scope: When squirrel is seen in declared tree or in a tree the squirrel may have timbered to within sixty (60) feet of the declared tree.

D. Judge Determination: Upon arrival at the tree, the judge will determine what dogs are showing tree and what dogs are not and score them accordingly.

E. Prior Call Requirement: If squirrel is caught and dog(s) are not declared treed, no points will be awarded. Dog must be called treed prior to the catch to receive points.

F. Visual Certainty: No scoring of a mass in a tree, dark spot, or whatever 'appears' to be a squirrel. It must be certain that a squirrel has been seen to receive plus points.

G. Refuge Tracking: Dog or Dogs must be called treed to receive plus points for squirrel seen that timbers into hole or seen in 60' search area.

SECTION 10: Points Will Be Minus

A. Empty Tree: When dogs tree and the cast can plainly see that no squirrel is there, and there is no possibility that a squirrel may have timbered or have gone to a hole, nest within 60 ft. of the declared tree.

B. Leaving Tree / Failing to Show: The Judge should observe and make sure all dogs declared treed are showing treed by either looking up or barking up before handlers leash their dogs. If a dog declared treed is not showing treed, the judge shall allow 15 seconds for it to show treed or it is minus. (The judge must announce when the 15 seconds has started) If the dog **doesn't** show treed within the 15 seconds, it shall be minus if it was over 10 steps (30 feet) from the tree shown. A dog may Timber (Run with head up) 60' without squirrel being seen. If dog goes over 60' Timbering (run with head up) and no squirrel is seen, dog will receive a minus.

C. Ninety Second Rule: After a dog is declared treed, at least one of the dogs declared treed must bark at least once every ninety (90) seconds on the tree receive minus.

D. Calling Silent Dog: When any handler trees his dog that has not barked or trees another handler's dog, the judge will award points called and minus them.

SECTION 11: Circle Points

A. Reasonable Attempt: Points will be circled when a dog trees up a tree where there could be a squirrel, effort should be made to score a dog.

B. Obvious Timber Tracking: If it is obvious that dogs are following a timbering squirrel by their actions (running along and looking up trees) and end up treed in den or large tree, within the 60 ft and squirrel is not seen, circle points will be awarded if the other dogs were declared treed.

C. Non-Tree Place of Refuge: **When a dog tree is in a place of refuge (log, structure, etc.) any place other than a tree. Search time and search will be granted if no squirrel seen tree is deleted.**

SECTION 12: Points Will Be Deleted

A. Time Out: If time out must be called.

B. Safety & Proximity Proxies: When the judge orders dogs to be called off because of livestock or nearness of a highway, buildings, Danger etc.

C. Treeing on Closed / Previously Scored Tree: **When dog is called treed after tree is closed. Points will be deleted if this is the dogs first time at a tree. dogs will be -125 for his second time returning to a**

previously scored tree. The Dog will be Scratched if dog is in fact treed on a previously scored tree for the third time. (Previously Scored tree is the 60' Search area)

D. Dangerous Obstacle: When dogs are treed across deep water or other dangerous obstacle, after all efforts to reach dogs have been exhausted and the cast cannot reach the dogs, all points should be deleted, and the time out rule applied. Under no circumstances should any cast member attempt to cross water deep enough to require swimming.)

E. Ground Refuge Empty: When dogs tree in a dead log or a place of refuge and no game is seen, points will be deleted. When dog trees in holes in ground and no game is immediately seen in hole, points will be deleted. No search time or area is granted.

SECTION 13: Dogs Will Be Scratched

General Provision: Dogs or handlers will be scratched for interfering with another dog or handler's ability to compete. Dogs or handlers should be scratched as a last resort. Every effort should be made to allow dogs and handlers to compete. Reasons for scratching are as follows:

A. 15-Minute Hunting Rule: If dog fails to hunt for fifteen (15) consecutive minutes. Dogs failing to go hunting during any fifteen (15) minute period of hunting time will be scratched. The handler has the right to walk dog in the direction guide wishes to hunt. A dog must actively be hunting for a period of five minutes to break the fifteen (15) minute rule, unless hunting time expires.

B. Social Infractions & Aggression: A dog sniffing, face barking or trying to ride another dog or showing aggression will be warned of the first offence and scratched on second offence. Fighting on first offence. Both dogs will be scratched for fighting if primary aggressors cannot be determined or if a dog was under warning for above-mentioned offenses, it will be scratched as the primary aggressor.

C. Domestic Animal Chasing: If seen by non-hunting judge or majority of cast, chasing domestic animals (not including cats) or livestock.

D. Non-Tree Game: If dog is seen by non-hunting judge or majority of cast running 'non-tree game' on the first offense dog will take 125 minus points and will be scratched on the second offense.

E. Continuous Barking Rule: If a dog continuously barks for a period of 3 minutes without being declared treed, the dog will receive 125 minus points on the first offence and scratch the second offence. A dog must be silent for 30 seconds to break the 3 minutes. If a dog goes silent before the 3 minutes expires, a handler shall be given the opportunity to immediately make a tree call if the dog barks after the 3 minutes has expired but before being silent for 30 seconds. The Continuous Barking Rule cannot be applied when there is a dog declared treed or a tree is being scored.

F. Ghost Calling: When handler calls his dog that has not opened or calls another handler's dog, on second offense.

G. Delaying Cast: If dog becomes lost or delays cast for more than 45 minutes, when time-out is called.

H. Handler Abuse/Interference: If handler encourages, discourages, or abuses dog. 125 minus First offence, scratched second offence.

I. Profanity / Conduct: If handler shows unsportsmanlike conduct or uses excessive profanity.

J. Sobriety: If handler is under the influence of alcohol or nonprescription drugs. Abusive manners are not to be tolerated.

K. Tardy Scorecard: If scorecard is returned after the deadline.

L. Repeated Empty Tree Returns: For going back to the same tree (as in the exact same tree) and handling the second time dog will receive a -125. If the dog is handled three times on the same tree the dog will be scratched.

M. Fighting Ban Recurrence: Any dog that has been scratched for fighting three (3) times in a twelve (12) month period will be barred from any USDC events for a period of not less than one year from the last offense.

N. Dogs will be scratched)

If the dog receives 375 minus points, total during cast dog will be scratched.

SECTION 14

: Time-Out Rules

A. Authority to Call: Time out may be called by Guide, non-hunting judge or by All members of the cast when dog(s) or cast members are in danger, when interference occurs, or it is required to move in order to finish the hunt.

B. Lost Dog Ceiling: A time out for a lost dog will be no more than 45 minutes. If handler and lost dog have not returned to the cast within the 45-minute limit, dog(s) will be scratched.

C. Score Freeze: No score can be achieved during a time out.

D. Universality: A called time-out will apply to all dogs in the cast.

E. Search Restriction: A time-out will not be used to search a tree.

F. Medical: In case of accident or sickness.

SECTION 15: Ties & Tiebreakers

Tie-Breaking Hierarchy: All ties are to be broken for a cast winner. The proper procedure to break a tie is as follows:

A. Dog with most first Plus tree points

- B. Dog with least minus points
- C. The dog with the most circle points
- D. The dog with the most first trees plus or circle
- E. The dog with the most plus 2nd trees.
- F. The dog with the most 1st tree circle points.
- G. The dog with the most 2nd tree circle points.

H. Physical Overtime: If still a tie, Dogs involved in a tie for a CAST WIN, shall be handled at the conclusion of the hunt time and then recast for a 10-minute tie breaker round to decide the winner or handlers involved in the tie may agree to hunt sudden death or flip a coin to determine the winner. (Points received during the tie-breaker round is to be added to the score on the scorecard only to determine the winner but are not included for the final score) If still a tie after 10 minutes 1st option Sudden death, second option coin flip, third option Withdraw to determine winner.

SECTION 16: Entry Refusal

Nondiscrimination Policy: USDC or a sponsoring club has the right to refuse entry to any dog or handler. However, no handler will be barred based on religion, race, color, national origin, sex, or physical impairment.

SECTION 17: Cast Winners

A. Final Score Matrix: The final score is determined by subtracting all minus points from all plus points. All circle points count as zero as a final score.

B. Point Precedent: No tree points - A dog who has no tree points (circle or plus) cannot place over a dog who has treed and has received circle or plus points on tree, regardless of final score.

SECTION 18: Order of Placement

Placement Criteria: After determining the final score, the order of placement is (This pertains to placing in a cast or cast winners placing in the final three.):

1. Most plus points: If more than one dog has the same amount of plus points as a final score, see tie breaking rules.
2. Total score of zero: All circle points count as zero final score. If more than one dog has a final score of zero (no plus and no minus), see tie-breaking rules.

3. Least minus points: (Example: Dog A has 200 circle points and will have a final score of zero. Dog B has 400 circle points and 25 minus and will have a final score of minus 25. Dog C has 200 plus, 300 circle, and 275 minus for a total score of 75 minus. Dogs will place: Dog A with 0, dog B with 25 minus, and dog C with 75 minus)
4. All dogs placing second in a cast will place over dogs placing third in a cast for final placement.
5. You must be a cast winner to place in a hunt.

SECTION 19: Drawing of Casts

Draw Rules: It is very important that all judges, guides, and handlers draw for their cast. Any person who owns more than one dog entered in an event may request a separate drawing provided USDC registration papers are in order and are presented to the Hunt Director to prove ownership.

SECTION 20: Good Judgement Rule

Spirit of the Rule: These rules are written and intended to identify and reward the dog that hunts and trees a squirrel and stays until his handler comes. At times it will be necessary to use good judgement rather than a literal interpretation of these rules toward this end. It is written within the scope of these rules for the Judge and/or Hunt Director to rule on a situation not specifically covered in detail by the rules.

SECTION 21: Cell Phones

Device Restrictions: Cell phones and other personal communication devices may be carried on a cast but **MUST REMAIN ON SILENT** until the hunt time is completed. The exception to this rule is if an emergency occurs on the cast, requiring the use of a cell phone to call for help. Spectators must also keep phones on silent until hunt time is completed.

SECTION 22: Reserving Entries

Booking Provisions: Any Individual reserving an entry is responsible for paying for entry. Anyone that fails to show or pay for their entry will be barred from attending any event until balance of entry is paid.

SECTION 23: Degree of Champions

Championship Earnings Thresholds: \$750 Squirrel Champion, \$2000 Elite Squirrel Champion, \$5000 Ultimate Squirrel Champion, \$10,000 Major Squirrel Champion, \$20,000 Platinum Squirrel Champion, and \$40,000 Double Platinum Squirrel Champion.

SECTION 24: Split Final Purse

2. If all handlers/owners of the finalist dogs agree to split the final purse and choose not to hunt for the final cast for placement, the purse of money will be divided equally among the dogs involved. Each dog will also receive an equal share of the points and lifetime earnings associated with that placement. To receive full points, the final cast must be hunted, and placements determined through competition. If the cast is not hunted and the purse is split by mutual agreement, points will be divided equally among the participating dogs.