

National Specialty Event Coordinators' Task Force Report

August 1, 2009

Dianne Barnes, President
Golden Retriever Club of America

Dear Dianne:

As you know, the Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) Board of Directors established a National Specialty Event Coordinators' Task Force to "research the pros and cons of forming a group of Event Coordinators to work with Member Clubs to host GRCA National Specialties and manage the National Specialty Treasury to eliminate (financial) risk to both the GRCA and potential host clubs." The board called for the Task Force to be comprised of a chairman and six additional members. Several members were added to the Task Force at a later date. A copy of the Board's job description is included in a separate file.

The Task Force developed an outline for discussion purposes and has made recommendations in each of the following areas:

1. GRCA National Committee
2. Fund Raising/Finances
3. Location
4. Hotels
5. Superintendents
6. Events
 - a. Judging Events
 - b. Social Events
7. Catalogs
8. Judges

As National Specialties have grown in scope and complexity, fewer GRCA member clubs have the resources, volunteers and financial/management/site selection expertise to tackle such a large undertaking. However, the Task Force still recommends that clubs continue to host the Nationals in various areas in each region rather than promote the idea of setting up permanent places to hold the show.

This may have to change. But we are hopeful that establishing a GRCA National Specialty Committee will relieve clubs from some of the burden of holding a National Specialty and encourage more clubs to volunteer to host these events.

We recommend that a National Specialty Committee with several volunteer positions (National Specialty Director/Coordinator, National Specialty Treasurer, National Specialty Fund Raiser/Ways and Means Chair and National Specialty Webmaster) be established within purview of the GRCA. This committee would guide and assist local host clubs in putting on National Specialties.

In addition, we recommend that the GRCA do the following:

1. Rewrite the National Specialty Handbook, using the manual of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club as a guide.
2. Put increased emphasis on on-going fund raising, obtaining long-term sponsors in order to offset National Specialty costs.
3. Investigate the feasibility of using a "housing" company to negotiate with hotels.
4. Investigate entering into a long-term arrangement with one show Superintendent
5. Limit the number of events required at a National Specialty.
6. Develop creative ways to obtain larger attendance at the National Specialty Annual Meeting.
7. Work with host clubs to produce catalogs in a more cost-effective manner.
8. Develop a more effective system of working with host clubs to choose judges.

Finally, we recognize that the majority of the GRCA membership has no idea of the complexity of putting on a National Specialty and members don't know that financial losses incurred by some recent Nationals have put the National Specialty itself in jeopardy. In this regard, these members may not understand why some of the suggested changes may be necessary and may oppose them because they do not have enough information. Therefore, we suggest that a summary of our conclusions which are approved by the GRCA board be published in the *GRNews* at an appropriate time.

We hope that the attached report will be useful as you make final decisions related to future National Specialties, which will be more cost effective and less of a burden on local clubs, but still remain the premier National Specialty in the Nation and provide an appropriate showcase for the many talents of the Golden Retriever.

Sincerely,
GRCA National Specialty Event
Coordinators' Task Force:
Ane Brusendorff, Chair

Karen Arbuthnot
Judy Word
Vickie White

Sue Armstrong
Sherri Farmer
Joyce Kinghorn

Alison Desmarais
Martha Glenn

A NATIONAL SPECIALTY COMMITTEE

The Task Force agreed on the need to create a GRCA National Specialty Committee that would work with each local host club.

The GRCA National Specialty Committee's mission is:

1. To partner with and provide key personnel to the host club for active support, guidance and expertise.
2. To assist in reducing the financial responsibility of the host club by raising money through the GRCA.
3. To provide continuity from year to year.
4. To ensure that the National Specialty continues to be a fiscally viable, attractive and successful event.

We recommend that the following positions be established by the GRCA Board of Directors:

GRCA National Specialty Coordinator/Director

Overview: Reporting to the GRCA Board of Directors, the person filling this three-year (minimum) position maintains oversight responsibilities of planning for all National Specialties, ensuring GRCA policies and timeline objectives are met. He or she oversees and works closely with the GRCA National Specialty Treasurer, the GRCA National Ways and Means Chairman and the GRCA National Webmaster. He or she also works in partnership with the GRCA Specialty Advisory Committee.

1. Acts as liaison to local host clubs and reports to the GRCA Board of Directors on all matters/requests that involve National Specialties.
2. Assists local club with negotiations for hotel/site contract(s) and ensures contracts are reviewed by an industry consultant or by the GRCA Legal Resource Committee.
3. Acts as mentor to the local general, show, and event chairs and is responsible for advising them of any new rules/regulations affecting their events.
4. Prepares and submits AKC applications for National Specialty events to the GRCA Secretary for approval and submission to AKC. These include but are not limited to: Show, Obedience Trial, Rally Trial, Agility Trial, Field Trial, Tracking Test, Special Attractions, Emergency Procedures, and Specialty Judges Panel. (Event Chairman is responsible for contracting vet/emergency services and developing Emergency Procedures/Contingency Plans.)
5. Prepares and submits the GRCA WC/WCX test application to the appropriate regional chairman.
6. Assists local club with preparation of standard judges' contracts.
7. Acts as GRCA's liaison with AKC departments for all questions including but not limited to: application approvals, date conflict checks, rule interpretations, new classes offered, etc.
8. Works with the local general chairman and/or event chairs to gather content for the main Premium List. Prepares all Premium Lists for the show and forwards to the GRCA Secretary and GRCA National Specialty Advisory Committee— for review. Submits final Premium Lists to show superintendent.
9. Works with the local general, show, and/or performance event chairmen to develop the Schedule of Events for the Premium List and finalize the schedule upon close of entries for the Judging Program.
10. Ensures events held under the GRCA are in compliance with GRCA policies and AKC's Rules Applying to Dog Shows and other regulations noted in AKC's Show/Trial Manual. Maintains content of the GRCA Specialty Handbook and updates as required.
11. Files annual committee report to the GRCA Board of Directors.

12. Oversees a timeline checklist – as in the list of what needs to be done one year out, six months out, four months out.

GRCA National Specialty Treasurer

Overview: The person filling this three-year (minimum) position manages the National Specialty finances in accordance with GRCA finance policies and prepares all final financial reports. Provides expertise to show chairs on budgetary planning and management, and ensures budgets are filed with National Specialty Coordinator (NSC) and GRCA Treasurer in a timely fashion. Reports to GRCA Treasurer.

Responsible for maintaining National Specialty checking account and timely processing of all specialty-related income and expenses, posting items to the Specialty general ledger (GL) in accordance with GRCA Specialty Chart of Accounts, financial policies and procedures. The Specialty Treasurer must be bonded.

1. Coordinates applications for credit and insurance certificates with GRCA Treasurer.
2. Assists show chairs with initial budget planning and management.
3. Submits updated Specialty budgets to the NS Coordinator to conform to designated timelines.
4. Prepares final financial statement for each National Specialty and submits reports to the GRCA Treasurer and NS Coordinator. Maintains copies of all records and receipts.
5. Works with local treasurer to manage finance needs on-site (e.g. payments to judges, vendors, daily management of cash receipts, etc.). If he or she is unable to attend, arrangements for payments can be handled in advance with cash management responsibilities delegated to the GRCA Treasurer, show chair or assistant show chair.

GRCA National Specialty Fund Raising/Ways & Means Chair

Overview: The person filling this three-year (minimum) position would offer immediate and continuing fund raising guidance to the designated host club fund raiser, sharing ideas on both pre-national fund raising ideas and suggestions for maximizing fund raising at all appropriate national events. This person should maintain coordination with the GRCA NS Chair and should either have responsibility for merchandise or work closely with the merchandise chair. He or she should be responsible for developing and implementing separate "on-going" fund raising projects not specific to any National and for negotiating long-term sponsorships.

Note: One committee member reported that the Master National Retriever Club designated an "on-going" person to be in charge of corporate fundraising and to coordinate with each local club fund raiser on plans for their auction. This person is an attorney who is experienced at negotiating and reviewing contracts. When I was the local club fund raiser for the Master National in 2006, the Master National Corporate Fund Raiser negotiated new or ongoing relationships with the following sponsors: Nestle Purina PetCare Company, Tri-Tronics, Iams, Working Retriever Central and Dogtra. The GRCA Fund Raiser should be "charged" with developing such relationships.

The NS Fund Raising person should possess the following experience:

1. At least two years of successful communications and fundraising experience, with knowledge of how to solicit at the national level.
2. Excellent interpersonal skills.
3. Successful experience as a member of a local GRCA club planning auctions/raffles and managing an auction committee.
4. Ability to give advice to local host club on the use of PayPal, credit cards and other fund raising management devices.

GRCA National Specialty Webmaster

Overview: The person filling this three-year (minimum) position must have knowledge of web designs and must possess technical knowledge to create an interactive website so as to incorporate an online store for merchandise sales and interactive online forms. He or she must communicate well with someone from the host club to keep the website updated and should be coordinating when necessary with the GRCA Webmaster.

Note: The Task Force recommends that a new page for selling annual National Specialty items be added to the GRCA website so that (while the content changes from year to year depending on the local club's merchandise) the web address remains the same.

FUND RAISING

Fund raising is not a rocket science but many people do not have the "makeup" to tackle asking people for "things" and money. The local host club fund raiser must have some previous experience with fund raising, be prepared to ask questions, listen to every idea presented, be creative in developing a contact list, be able to show potential donors "what's in it for them" and, be able to deal with rejection by not getting mad when turned down. Remember that the next host club may have a "special connection" that can get something the previous fund raiser was unable to obtain.

Recipe for Success

The most important aspects of being successful are:

1. Possession of leadership, coordination and communications skills. This includes the ability and willingness to pose questions to experienced people, including fundraisers of past successful Nationals. A successful fund raiser must be able to "think outside the box" and must find ways to praise and reward volunteers.
2. Starting early – start as soon as you know you are the fund raiser for a National.
3. Development of a plan that includes backup and emergency contingencies (for example, what to do in case of bad weather) and "think outside the box."
4. Having a committed cadre of volunteers.

Pre-National Fund Raising

It has been suggested that the host club conduct pre-National fund raising such as holding seminars, making videos, holding photo contests and Agility Trials – and we believe for 2009 – development and sales of a cookbook. This is a choice that should be made by the local club with advice from the NS Coordinator. The "downside" of doing this is over working volunteers before the National Specialty even begins.

As an alternative to the above approach, in 2005 the Potomac Valley Golden Retriever Club (PVGRC) held three Agility Trials and then "lent" its National account funds from the club treasury rather than conduct other pre-National fund raising activities and wear out volunteers before the National began. This seemed to work well as volunteers were needed for the following to conduct successful fund raising during the National: solicit, store and collate items; solicit state baskets and get them set up at the National Welcome Dinner; put together and transport approximately 150 raffle baskets and art work; "man" merchandise and/or raffle tables at numerous National events in addition to main venue for one week.

The local host club fund raiser (or fund raisers if you can have a chair and co-chair) should carefully assess the volunteer potential in their club and decide whether or not to try to raise a lot of funds prior to the National Specialty. The host club will need a large num-

ber of volunteers to conduct auctions or raffles, sell merchandise or whatever *during the entire week of a National Specialty*. Therefore, if you want to raise funds with seminars, videos, cookbooks or whatever in the year prior to the Specialty, you might consider having a separate set of volunteers for pre-National fund raising.

State Baskets

In 2005 PVGRC "borrowed" an idea from the Flat-Coated Retriever Society of America that worked very well. The club fund raiser asked each GRCA club if it would like to donate a "state" basket of items either unique to their state or unique crafts. Over 15 clubs responded and a silent auction was held for the baskets at the Welcome Dinner, raising \$6,000.

They asked that the baskets be worth around \$150 - \$500 and gave 10 percent of the proceeds to the club providing the basket that got the highest bid. The procedure was written up in the *GRNews*. Funds raised in this manner could be used to offset Specialty expenses or donated to a worthy cause.

The Task Force isn't sure this whole concept has been implemented since 2005. The Task Force strongly suggests that clubs look into using this idea in the future. Instead of having all the baskets raffled off at once you could place a few at a time at various events or at the Annual Meeting.

Raffles at Main Venue

All clubs seem to do this with various levels of success:

1. Begin early or at least by January.
2. Solicit club members and friends for items. Get local and club artists to make things which ID the National.
3. Develop a nationwide mailing list, identify the donations person at each business and personally address letters to them. Follow up with phone calls and e-mails. *You must find a way to personalize your request.*
4. Solicit locally to those who would benefit from the exposure.
5. Try to find a member with a large basement where you can store and "stuff" baskets and organize single items (arts and crafts).
6. Concentrate on Golden Retriever-related items.
7. Contact each vendor coming to your event and require (in the contract) an "in-kind" donation to be raffled off. Works well.
8. Don't be afraid to spend some money for items that you think will bring "more" at the event.
9. Thank each person and company by letter or e-mail for their donation. *Very Important!*

Special Items Raffled on Website

This has been done and items included high-end jewelry or a room/suite for the National. (A room/suite should be negotiated in the hotel contract!) Other ideas that have been suggested: ringside seating, entry fee reimbursement and playing cards.

Suggested idea that hasn't been used: There are companies out there that will put a different Golden photo on each card of a 52-card deck. People could pay to have their dog as one of the 52 and then you could sell decks of cards. Each year people should "brainstorm" to come up with new ideas.

Raffles and Sales at Every Venue

Coordinate with merchandise chair – sell at every venue even if you have to find some people you have to pay to "man" the booths.

Many people who attend the field trial do not come to the main site. Have plenty of merchandise and field related donations at the field trial each day. Consider hiring sales people if you don't have

enough volunteers. Definitely have raffle items at the field trial banquet – field related items not stuffed toys and grooming equipment.

National Fund Raising Reports

The GRCA Fund Raising Advisor should make these yearly reports available to the host club fund raiser as soon as possible; they would be helpful.

LOCATION

As the National Specialty has grown in scope and complexity, it has become more difficult to recruit clubs to host the event. Few feel they have the resources and volunteers to tackle such a large undertaking. Sites themselves are limited due to the large number of participants, the necessity of ample room for the different venues, the need to have both show grounds and field trial grounds within close proximity, and the difficulty in locating dog-friendly hotels and facilities.

The Task Force discussed the pros and cons of keeping the current system, or setting up permanent sites. For now we recommend that the GRCA continue rotating the National around the country as it currently does, keeping an open mind to the future, when we may want to move to a fixed rotation of a few sites.

It is necessary to evaluate how this new GRCA National Specialty Committee develops before we can consider a fixed location as an alternative.

If establishing a National Committee to assist local clubs turns out to be a big success, the bugs are worked out and more positions are added to further relieve the local clubs of many of the burdens of hosting the National. There may come a time when we do not need to draw so heavily on the local clubs for personnel and can revisit a fixed location rotation option. Or, with the additional support supplied by the GRCA and a serious effort made to supply volunteers from the membership and attendees, it may be that it will not be difficult to recruit clubs to host the National, and a new location system will not be necessary.

In reaching this conclusion the Task Force discussed the following options:

1. Keeping the same three-year regional rotation schedule we currently employ. This system has been in place since 1967 and allows those unable to travel long distances to attend a national at least once every three years. The Task Force agrees that there is a great deal to be said for maintaining this system. Each location has a particular regional flavor and we all look forward to traveling to a new part of the country each year, sampling the local cuisine and seeing dogs not in our own neck of the woods.
2. Holding the National in the Central Region every other year and alternating Eastern and Western locations in the other years. Nationals in the Central Region have been the best attended in general, although the National in Gettysburg had the actual highest number of entries, with more than 1,000 more total entries across venues than any other national. Higher entries = more income = less fundraising pressure on the hosting club.
3. Having a set number of permanent rotating sites. This has the important advantage of not reinventing the wheel every year; we'd know who to contact for equipment, how to squeeze in the motor homes and where to put the rings. However, the principle disadvantage is that a great deal of ground support will be required, and that will need to come from those close to the show site. Clubs and volunteers may balk at being asked to commit a great deal of their time every few years. In addition, this system has the disadvantage of not being a fresh, new event each year, possibly reducing the desirability of attending.

4. A variation on the above is to have a few set locations, one for each region, but have a different club host the event each time that region's turn rolled around. The lead club would rotate among clubs in the region. Other clubs in that region would be expected to chair events or functions. The issue of local volunteers is still paramount, but this may be an option down the road if inroads are made into recruiting volunteers from the general attendance rather than heavily relying on those close to the show site. It may be possible to recruit a few key local volunteers on a repeating basis. Again, attendance may be reduced as a result of the repeating sites becoming stale.
5. Co-hosted Nationals. The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America rotates its National among 10 regions, and clubs within those regions may co-host. Groups of two or three neighboring clubs could co-host the events. Together they could decide on a location and the club nearest the show site could deal with local issues while the club(s) further away could handle things that can be done from a distance. The combined manpower would spread out the work and ensure that there are enough hands on deck so that no one is stretched too thin.

Role of the National Coordinator/Director on Location Decisions

The National Coordinator would work with interested clubs to find suitable sites. In addition, the National Coordinator would be the point person for solicitations received by the GRCA from sites willing to house our event. This person would vet the site to see if it meets our basic requirements. If acceptable, the clubs local to that site would be approached to see if a coalition could be constructed to hold a National Specialty there. A big piece of the battle is finding a location, so if the local clubs had some assistance in locating an appropriate location, there may be more willingness to host.

The move is also toward a National where volunteers come not just from the club hosting the National, but also from attendees and the GRCA membership at large. If we established a number of positions that could be administered from a distance, this would reduce the load on the host club. This could result in an even wider variety of locations for the National as more clubs would be willing to take on this size of a dog show.

HOST HOTEL

"Hotels" is an area where host clubs have lost a lot of money in the past. This is probably one of the scariest parts of hosting a National Specialty because of the unknowns and the potential financial losses. The hotel business is very intricate and it is apparent that in order to gain the most benefit from the business we are giving the hotels, we need a professional team to work that aspect – someone who knows the hotel business and knows how to work it. Bringing a large event to a hotel is good business for the hotel and should never end up costing the host organization, especially the numbers that local Golden clubs have ended up losing over the years.

Recommendation to Use a Housing Company to Identify and Negotiate with Hotels

Hotels can be a source of income for GRCA whether the show is held on the hotel grounds or at another site. This is one area where having experienced negotiation and management each year would take a huge load off the committee's shoulders and could potentially be a big fund raiser for the event. An event as large as the GRCA National Specialty should have professionals negotiating with hotels and managing the reservation nightmare. There are housing companies that do this for a living who know all the industry standards

concerning hotel use and how to manage initial reservations, changes, cancellations, and enforcement of reservation restrictions. It would be very beneficial for GRCA to contract with a housing company to do this each year. This is an area where not reinventing the wheel each year would be not only monetarily beneficial but also an incredible load off the host committee's shoulders.

Of all the problems host clubs encounter with the hotel, some of the biggest and most expensive stem from people overbooking, late cancellations, and making last minute changes. Until there is a penalty for these things, the problems will continue. Some drastic measures must be taken to alleviate the problems and costs caused by people "playing" with their hotel reservations. Someone has to manage it and this is much too big a job for a volunteer or even a group of volunteers. Hotels themselves will not institute reservation/cancellation restrictions because it's too much work for them to keep up with, but housing companies do this on a daily basis and know the ins and outs and the legal limits. Housing companies know what an organization can ask for and what the industry standard is. Industry standards include cancellation/change restrictions, per-room-night rebates, comp rooms based on number of room nights, banquet rooms, meeting rooms, etc.

A housing company would take care of, among other things:

1. Negotiating a per-room-night rebate, anywhere from \$5-\$20 per room night.
2. Setting and enforcing reservation (cancellation/changes) restrictions.
3. Negotiating for meeting rooms, comp rooms, banquet rooms, etc.

The benefits of a housing company doing this every year and not reinventing the wheel would be immeasurable. Just taking the load off the host club's plate and having the assurance that the details will be handled professionally would be worth its weight in gold.

The Task Force recommends taking this huge business-side of the National Specialty out of the hands of volunteers and putting it in the hands of professionals to gain maximum benefit.

Note: There will be a concern about the expense of hiring a housing company. But our research indicates this cost is dealt with in the negotiation. Here is the explanation straight from a housing company we interviewed:

"My payment comes from the hotel in one of two ways: In either splitting the rebates with the organization or through commission paid by the hotel in addition to the rebates.

"Since the housing company would be gathering all of the client information and working directly with the client, the hotel actually pays us after the event based on room nights actually picked up by the event.

"After the event is completed the housing company invoices the hotel for our payment as well as the event monies. We then will audit to be sure that the hotel has paid the event the correct amount due to them.

"So for an organization, it is a complete win/win situation. They are free to handle their function, while we handle the hotel negotiations and bookings to fulfill the hotel contract and collect monies on the back end."

SUPERINTENDENT & PREMIUM LIST

It appears that the majority of the GRCA membership has no idea of the complexity of putting on a National Specialty and doesn't know that the financial losses incurred by some recent Nationals have put the National itself in jeopardy.

The issue of which Superintendent to use and the cost of catalogs are just two more areas in which there are potential cost savings.

Electronic Premiums Recommended

We no longer need the Super to mail out 4,000 premiums. Members are now notified electronically and in the *GRNews* that the premium is available on line. The cost savings here is great, but (as with many of the Task Force suggestions) it may have to be explained to the membership, perhaps through the publication of the major Task Force findings and GRCA Board of Directors decisions regarding these findings in the *GRNews*.

Now that people are accustomed to electronic premiums, we should not go backwards on this to paper. It is too much of a money-saver. We should make sure that the supers know to take this into consideration in their quotes. We should have supers quote ribbons separately, too, if we're going to get our act together and figure out how to do reusable ribbons. The catalog is a monster that makes quotation difficult.

Ongoing Relationship with a Superintendent

The Task Force recommends creation of a small team to investigate the idea forming an ongoing relationship with a Superintendent.

To use the same Superintendent year after year would be preferable, perhaps three at the most on a rotating basis, if one is not a possibility. The amount of work that is done each year for each new host and varying superintendents seems really wasteful.

Selecting a Superintendent/Show Secretary is a constantly evolving process, especially for National Specialties. Rather than "lock in" on a particular superintendent for a given region, it could be left to the discretion of the GRCA NS Coordinator to select the best, most affordable show superintendent/secretary for that particular National.

Most superintendents charge x dollars per entry and x dollars (usually half or less) for each additional entry of the same dog, this price includes a set number of Premiums (standard, 16 pages) and a set number of catalogs plus normal services, material and labor. It may also include ring equipment, matting and ribbons. Exactly what is included in the base price differs for each Superintendent, so you are comparing apples to oranges. Asking them to give us a price per entry without the inclusion of Premiums, catalogs, ribbons, and equipment would help to normalize the comparison.

To investigate Superintendents' and Show Secretaries' contracts, services and prices will require that the same questions be asked in order to compare apples to apples. That can be very difficult, since each Super works their own way.

It was beyond the ability of the Task Force to reach a final resolution with our limited time. But, we tried to put together a questionnaire for Superintendents. Here are some of the issues we think should be addressed:

1. Fees
2. Willingness to travel distances
3. Desire to do a GRCA National
4. Ability to do the size of the catalog GRCA requires
5. Experience doing large Nationals and references on which we could follow up
6. Break out the cost per entry minus Premium/catalog/ribbons/equipment
7. Question of providing only equipment (superintendents only)
8. Question of providing a catalog with additional entries and information for other events and programs
9. Charge for travel/hotel/meals and for how many people

The following is one of the committee member's opinion about using a Show Secretary:

"In my opinion, based on the size of our entry it would be a daunting task for one person to do the job of Show Secretary for a Golden Retriever National. The Show Secretary has to prepare the premium list, judging program, entry confirmations, catalog, armbands and judges' books. Assuming this person would only be responsible for accepting the conformation, obedience, rally and junior showmanship entries, they would then have to type all the AKC-required info on each entry for the catalog. According to the judging program, the 2008 National had 1,178 dogs entered with 1,613 entries in just those events mentioned – the size of a good-sized all breed show. There are separate secretaries for the field trial, hunt test, working certificate, tracking test, and agility trial responsible for accepting and cataloging all those entries. But all of those entries then have to be coordinated into one big catalog that is printed.

One big drawback is that your conformation/obedience exhibitor would be limited to mailing or faxing their entries in – there probably would not be an online entry service or phone in entry service like we are used to with MB-F, Onofrio, or other dog show superintendents. That would be a real crunch for the Show Secretary at closing date time even though we generally close National Specialty entries four (4) weeks prior to the actual show dates. It's also going to cause exhibitors to go ballistic when they realize the entry submission restrictions.

The Show Secretary also has to be a master accountant: tracking entry fees paid, money due/refunded, postage and printing expenses, calculate sweepstakes payouts and coordinate all credit card transactions and checks received with the club treasurer, by my estimate, in the neighborhood of \$50,000 or more for just the conformation/obedience/rally entries alone. They then have to attend each day's events, collect any outstanding monies due the club, receive and record all event results, and submit all event results to AKC within seven days."

We have included a single contract from one Superintendent we have contacted (as an additional file) and here is the list of Superintendents we think could handle the GRCA National:

BaRay Event Services, Inc.
Roy Jones Dog Shows
Foy Trent Dog Shows
Rogers Dog Shows

CATALOG

The Task Force recommends keeping the tradition of having one big catalog like we are doing now because it is a reference book that is kept on the shelf for many years. Field people like their separate catalog. Apparently, agility people rarely buy a catalog.

Granted, these catalogs are monsters. But, it seems that most people who attend (and many who do not) adore the catalogs. We already have individual catalogs for the Field Trial, WC/WCX Test, Tracking Test, and Hunt Test (if one is held).

If advertising goes south and few people buy the big catalog for a couple of years, then, perhaps the new National Specialty Committee should re-visit this issue.

Catalog management might be made easier if:

1. We work out a formula to figure out how many catalogs to order, based on number of entries.
2. We hire a single Superintendent who doesn't have to reinvent the catalog wheel every year.

JUDGING EVENTS

GRCA policy currently *requires* the following judging events be held at our National Specialty:

- Conformation
- Junior Showmanship
- Obedience Trial
- Field Trial
- Working Certificate/Excellent (WC/WCX) Tests
- Tracking Tests (TD & TDX)

The following judging events are *optional*:

- Sweepstakes, Puppy & Veteran
- Agility Trial
- Rally Trial
- Hunting Tests (Junior, Senior, Master)
- Tracking Test (VST only)
- CCA
- Triathlon Award

In reviewing this committee's e-mail comments over the last nine months, it is obvious that we are quite a diverse group and have very strong, well-founded opinions on what changes should be made to improve the process of putting on future Golden Retriever National Specialties.

It is difficult not to be biased when discussing what event should or should not be deleted from the schedule for future Nationals. If agility is your "thing" you are naturally going to stand fast and want every class offered. If you feel strongly about Sweepstakes being an integral part of exhibiting or observing Golden Retrievers during the specialty week, then of course you're going to be upset or disappointed if it's not held at a given National. The same goes for tracking events. Although they constitute a very small contingent of competitors, they are nonetheless extremely loyal and dedicated to their sport. The same is true for Rally, Hunt Tests, and the other optional events. It is *very* hard to drop an AKC or GRCA event once it's available or previously been held at a National. We have a very competitive breed and a burning desire to earn as many titles, legs, wins, placements, etc. as we can. To say "we accomplished it" at a National Specialty is the *crème de la crème* of achievements.

Host clubs often find themselves in the awkward position of offering only those events they can comfortably handle based on their club's strengths, weaknesses and available resources weighed against the public's expectations on what *they* think should be offered. Compounding the issue are the financial considerations of whether it is feasible to offer an event that will not make a profit or break even, like Sweepstakes or Tracking Tests. Agility and Rally Trials, on the other hand, have proven to be quite profitable so it can be a win-win situation for these events to be offered *if* the host club has the resources (venue, manpower, experience) to hold them. The entry figures for the Sweepstakes classes, Agility and Rally Trials at past Nationals reflect just how popular these events are with Golden Retriever exhibitors and are a huge draw for any host club.

After much discussion on the pros and cons of holding different events, the Task Force members were polled on whether they thought the current optional events should be changed to a required event, left as optional, or eliminated.

Sweepstakes

Sweepstakes is another conformation venue for enthusiasts to showcase their puppies and veterans and has become extremely popular at National, Regional and independent specialties. In fact, despite the cost, all local specialty clubs host at least one day of

Sweepstakes in conjunction with their independent specialty weekend. Whether to hold a Sweepstakes or not at the National Specialty is probably one of the most debatable topics – not only amongst our group – but across the country. Host clubs that have considered dropping Sweepstakes judging from their National schedule suffer an onslaught of criticism from conformation enthusiasts across the country. Our committee was split down the middle about whether to leave it as an optional event or to eliminate it from the schedule.

The thinking that Sweepstakes adds a day to the schedule was probably logical up until Agility and Rally Trials entered into the National schedule. Going back as far as 1998, the Nationals have all held Sweepstakes either the same day as the Agility Trial and/or the Field Trial. In fact, if anything adds a day to the schedule it's a large conformation entry — four days for the 2000 National in St. Louis, the 2003 National in Ohio, the 2005 National in Gettysburg, and the 2008 National in Warwick.

Note: The 2002 National in Orlando also spread conformation judging over four days although their entry was the lowest since 1994 – perhaps for a more relaxed schedule for visitors to go sightseeing?

One Task Force member said a previous National General Chairman said it best in his final report: "With a relatively large breed entry expected, it makes economic sense to hold Sweeps, even if it is not a mandatory event. While you might break even or not make much money after the superintendent takes their fees and the money gets divided up among the winners, it encourages conformation entries, giving people 'two bites of the apple'."

If Sweepstakes is kept as an optional event, GRCA should consider changing the ratios for the Best in Sweeps to 15% (from 20%) and BOS in Sweeps to 10% (from 15%). This would give the host club an additional 10% in revenue to cover expenses. Based on the entries for the 2008 National, the Best in Sweeps (Puppy) winner would get \$600 vs. the \$800 they actually received. The Best in Veteran Sweeps winner would get \$182.50 vs. the \$273.75 they actually received.

Agility, Rally and Hunt Tests

Most Task Force members agreed that the Agility, Rally, and Hunt Tests should be left as optional events.

Tracking Tests

Several Task Force members felt that the tracking events should be eliminated because they never make a profit, impact so few exhibitors (11 of the past 14 Nationals had a total tracking entry of under 20), and require large resources in the way of manpower and available grounds. In reviewing the financial statements going back to the 2000 National, the average loss for the tracking events held at seven Nationals was \$1,023 (\$211.00 being the lowest loss; \$2,218.00 being the highest loss) – certainly not an insurmountable figure when you're looking at a budget in the \$300,000 range. It should be noted that I did *not* include the \$4,088 loss for the tracking tests held at the 2008 National, as I believe this to reflect unusually poor budgeting and lack of oversight.

The general consensus was that the tracking events should be left optional so that the host club can assess their ability to chair this event.

Certificate of Conformation Assessment (CCA)

The general consensus from our committee was that this event should either be eliminated entirely from the National schedule or administered completely by the GRCA CCA Committee – not the host club. It places an additional burden on a club for resources (both for manpower and site) to work into an already full schedule.

Conclusion

It's very important to acknowledge the talent, experience and egos that are in the average local Golden Retriever club and recognize that certain optional events will be regarded as "must have" events to many club members in certain parts of the country. A potential host club with an active agility contingent will strongly favor holding one with their National, especially if they're already experienced holding annual trials locally. A club with members who actively train for tracking titles and who help chair or work at their own club's tracking tests will not think twice about wanting to hold at least the TD and TDX for their National. The same holds true for Rally and some field events like Hunt Tests.

One of our committee members made a very good point by suggesting that no changes be made to the Events list at this time, but instead rely on the National Specialty Committee (NSC) to relieve the pressure on clubs to host the National as a first choice of action before recommending the elimination of any event.

Finally most Task Force members agreed that the host club should still be the final decision maker when it comes to what optional events they are willing and able to hold. Their membership knows if they have the necessary resources to put on a successful event, if they will have to "outsource" the event to another breed, agility, tracking, or retriever club, or eliminate the event entirely from the schedule.

SOCIAL EVENTS

The money collected for most social events barely covers the actual costs of the event. There is usually a break even point with the banquet facility, meaning you must have X number of people attending before you even break even on the cost of the food. Remember, when working with a banquet facility there is usually not a charge for the room.

When deciding on the price of the ticket, please be aware of any extra expenses such as tables, tablecloths, centerpieces, microphones, stage, drink tickets, and a guest favor. If these items are not included in the price you will lose money on the event!

The GRCA National Specialty Handbook is vague when it comes to the social events associated with the National. The events that are in the Handbook and have been held over the past years are as follows:

- GRCA Annual Meeting
- Annual Awards Banquet
- Golden Retriever Foundation Art Auction and Gala/Top Twenty
- Member Education Program
- Annual Field Trial Banquet
- Hospitality Room
- Parade of Rescue Dogs
- Parade of Titleholders
- Tracking Dinner
- Welcome Dinners – conformation, field, tracking

Annual Meeting

Holding an Annual Meeting is mandatory, and all expenses related to the Annual Meeting are the responsibility of GRCA. However, arrangements should be made by the host club with a facility to host this event. This should be the most important event of the National Specialty. But attendance has been minimal. One suggestion would be to hold it in conjunction with the Parade of Titleholders, Welcome Dinner or another event. Offer appetizers before the event and a free drink ticket for the first 100 and/or some great door prizes that have been advertised in advance.

Annual Awards Banquet

This banquet is held on the evening that conformation is completed and the GRCA trophies are awarded to the appropriate winners. In recent years this has been a losing proposition for the host clubs. The host club needs to consider the extras before setting the price of the ticket (i.e. – drink tickets, centerpieces, giveaways). Reservations for this dinner should be included on the RSVP page and should be sent to the Specialty Treasurer. However, any venue may be provided where the GRCA trophies are awarded, a banquet is not necessary.

Note: It needs to be noted the Golden Retriever Foundation no longer holds an auction at this event.

Golden Retriever Foundation Art Auction Gala/Top Twenty

This is the major fund raiser for the Foundation and is handled by the Gala Committee. Information for the Gala should be included on the RSVP page and monies collected for the Foundation. This committee depends on the host club to set the date of this event two days prior to breed competition and consideration given to the location of this event. As long as the Golden Retriever Foundation is the host of the Gala/Top Twenty it is mandatory the host club consult with the committee on a date for this event.

Member Education Committee

The host club bears no responsibility for these events, except to act as liaison between the GRCA representatives and the site. Information for this event should be included in the premium list. A representative from the Breed Education Committee or subcommittees is in charge of this event and it is frequently held on one of the opening days of the National.

Judges Education Subcommittee of the Breed Education Committee

Traditionally holds an education session for prospective judges of Golden Retrievers. The host club may be asked to designate appropriate seating for these individuals and should be done during set-up of the ring or field events.

Annual Field Trial Banquet

Set on the middle evening of the trial and the awards for those stakes which have been completed can be presented. The big GRCA National Trophies which pertain to performance in the field are also presented at this time. This event is coordinated with the GRCA Trophy Curator. Reservations for this dinner should be included on the RSVP page and should be sent to the Specialty Treasurer. Any venue may be provided where the GRCA trophies are to be awarded, a banquet is not necessary.

Hospitality Room

A room should be provided at the Headquarters Hotel or on location for exhibitors to meet, greet, and socialize. The room does not have to be open at all hours, but should be available for the most popular times, which seem to be later afternoon or early evening.

Parade of Rescue

Although this is not a required event, some clubs have chosen to present a Parade of Rescue Dogs. This honors both the dog and his new owners and the rescue group that helped to place him. The Rescue Parade can take place during the day, usually during a lunch break. There is usually no charge or a small fee for participation; the dog receives a ribbon or other memento. Since this event will cost the host club money, maybe this event should be sponsored by the Golden Retriever Foundation's Fund for Rescue.

Parade of Titleholders

This event has usually been held in conjunction with the Welcome Dinner. This event honors the dog's titled accomplishments over the years. There is a charge or small fee for participation; the dog receives a ribbon or other memento. Reservations for this dinner should be included on the RSVP page and should be sent to the Specialty Treasurer.

Tracking Dinner

This event is occasionally held at the conclusion of the tracking event and is more like a tail-gate function. If hosting this event drink tickets, decorations and/or mementos should be considered in the ticket price. Reservations for this dinner should be included on the RSVP page and should be sent to the Specialty Treasurer.

Welcome Dinner

This is an informal banquet and gives people a chance to meet old friends. In the past it has been held the night before conformation begins. The Parade of Titleholders has been held in conjunction with this dinner. This is a great place for Club fundraisers, i.e. specialty club baskets. Welcome dinners or tail-gate parties should also be considered for the field events, tracking, etc. Reservations for this dinner should be included on the RSVP page and should be sent to the Specialty Treasurer.

Conclusion

After reviewing past National Specialty Treasurer's Report, it is apparent many of the dinners are a losing proposition for the Specialty Club. Failure to include the extras of the evening in the price of the ticket account for the majority of the loss however, participation in these events has fallen. Since, the GRCA requires the Specialty Club to hold the Awards Ceremony should some of the expenses be offset by the GRCA?

The *only* mandatory event at the National is the GRCA Annual Meeting. It is requested by the Golden Retriever Foundation, as long as they hold the Gala/Top Twenty that the host club works in conjunction with this committee on setting a night for this event.

It is not mandatory the host club hold a banquet to award the GRCA trophies. It is suggested the Host club may choose their social events upon the advice of the GRCA National Specialty Committee.

CONFORMATION JUDGES

The Task Force agrees that a new method of selecting judges should be found and instituted. Doubtless, the largest numbers of complaints every year are voiced (loudly!) when the upcoming judges names are announced, reminding many how much they dislike the current system.

Currently, the host club has complete control over judge selection. For some clubs, this is a "perk." For others, it is a burden. The method of selection for an agreed upon panel is solely at the discretion of the host club.

Some suggested ideas from the Task Force:

1. Leave things as they are.
2. Form a national Judges Selection committee whose sole mandate would be selecting judges for the GRCA National.
3. Give each member club the opportunity to submit a list of names. Have the Board, the newly formed National Specialty Committee, or the Breed Standard Committee act as final arbiter.

4. Have a "members only" section on GRCA website. Have members vote electronically on a list of judges. Those with the most votes are asked to judge.
5. Other Suggestions:
 - Agree that the National must have at least one breeder judge out of the three licensed judges invited to judge.
 - Make a list of all breeder judges, all sporting dog judges, all all-rounders who are licensed to judge Golden Retrievers. Include the provision that no one can repeat as a GRCA National Specialty judge more often than once every 10 years.
 - The membership will vote electronically on their top five choices in each category in a "members only" spot on the GRCA website.
 - This list of finalists will be sent to the host club. The Judges Selection Committee for the host club will make the final decision.
 - The timing of this suggests that the membership would vote for their top five in each category, for example, in December 2009, for the finalists to be given to the host club for the 2012 GRCA National.

The Task Force agreed that the GRCA Board should look into this issue and establish a committee to revisit the issue with member input.

PERFORMANCE JUDGES

The Task Force agrees that a list of criteria for the selection of judges in each venue should be available to clubs hosting a National Specialty. Some clubs will still require or desire assistance in finding judges that match the specified criteria. For these clubs, the National Specialty Committee should be able to provide them with a list of "experts" in each venue who are willing to help clubs in the selection process. For instance, the GRCA has a standing Field Education Committee that should be able to provide the expertise necessary to assist in the selection of field judges.

Developing criteria should not be a function of this committee but should be the responsibility of the National Specialty Committee. The following is offered only as a brief example of criteria for the selection of performance judges and was put together very quickly using the suggestions from experts in three areas.

First there are those criteria that should be required of all judges being considered for a National assignment. For example:

- *Friendliness (kind, helpful and encouraging)*. Most exhibitors will not take home a placement ribbon but a good judge can make everyone feel positive about their experience in the ring or field;
- *Exhibit an appreciation for the breed*. You see this more in field judging where some judges don't expect Golden Retrievers to be able to do the same work as a Lab. After agreeing to judge the National Field Trial, one judge told his friends he was judging the "Golden National Special Olympics";
- *Flexibility*. Judges need to be willing to go with the flow without coming unglued. All judges must be aware, prior to accepting their assignment, that this is a multi-venue National and that many exhibitors are entered in more than one event. Every effort should be made to accommodate these exhibitors;
- *Judges Expenses*. These should be reasonable and not include such things as First Class Air Fare, boarding of their dogs, etc.

Criteria for Individual Events:

Field Trial

1. Avoid getting whoever is available or local, or who someone knows about but knows nothing specific.
2. Choose judges who have an outstanding reputation as being open minded and have no bias re breeds of retrievers. If a committee picking the judges is not actively involved in field trials, they should approach the GRCA Field Education Committee, or approach a local field trial club and ask their advice.
3. For the All Age stakes – do not just go with two 4-pt. judges to make up the 8 pts. needed. If you can get at least one 8-pt. judge as well as one with 5-6 pts., it makes for a stronger panel.
4. Select judges who are current. Don't get someone just because they are always available to judge – there might be a reason for this. In addition, you want judges who are currently competing or very recently competed at the level you are asking them to judge and should at least have a placement at that level. You do not want someone who never gets out of the first or second series. That doesn't mean they can't be a good judge, but someone who has trained, handled and had some success at AA levels generally has a better feel for both the dogs and the contestants and what tests they should be able to do.
5. Try to get someone who does a fair amount of training on their own and understands dog work. Some persons who have "big name" dogs, have only run tests set up by their own pros and will often put up "training" tests rather than "trial" tests when they judge.
6. The Qualifying and the Derby are two of the most important stakes, and often they end up with the least experienced judges. If you can get an 8-pt. judge to be one of the co-judges, it is very important. Too often these stakes get judges who only meet the minimum requirements and the dogs and handlers get short changed. This is where novice dogs and people are introduced to the sport. It is very, very important to have judges who have empathy with these newcomers. You want judges who are kind, helpful, encouraging while still setting up tests which separate the dogs that are the cream of the crop from the others – while still giving everyone a chance to play as long as possible.
7. You should encourage the judges to give out a lot of JAMs!

Agility

1. Judges should be professional and have a pleasant personality.
2. Try to get judges who show a preference for big, wide open courses as opposed to tight, twisty courses with no flow. Should not require the dog or handler to be contortionists. Getting judges who run big dogs is a good idea.
3. Ask GR clubs in their area who hold independent agility trials for recommendations.

Obedience

1. Judges should be polite and willing to talk with exhibitors at the end of their assignments.
2. They should be willing to take the time for pictures after judging and be able to stay until the last picture has been taken.
3. AKC's website has judges' assignments both past and future. Check to see how many dogs they drew in past assignments rather than how many assignments they actually have.
4. Check with local AKC Obedience representative for questions about judges. They have been very helpful in the past.
5. Select judges who are as close as possible in degree of scoring (hard versus easy). ❖