

Spaniel Trials on Your Farm or Game Preserve

A simple guide for landowners

The Working Spaniel Club and the South Island Working Spaniel Club run a small number of **working-dog trials** each year. These events rely on the goodwill of farmers who allow access to suitable country. This sheet explains what happens on the day and what you can expect if a trial is held on your farm.

What the dogs do

Spaniel trials test trained English Springer Spaniels and Cocker Spaniels on their ability to:

- Hunt and find game under control
- Flush game cleanly
- Stop to flush
- Stay steady to the shot
- Retrieve to hand

These are **quiet, controlled working-dog events**, not large shoots or hunts.

Where trials are run

- **South Island:** Rabbit country around Middlemarch, Tekapo, and Ophir, on private farms with permission.
- **North Island:** Licensed preserves, hunting pheasants.

Both clubs are affiliated with NZGTA and DogsNZ, and support the NZ Game Conservation Alliance.

What you'll see on the day

A typical trial involves:

- Around **18 dogs**
- **2 judges**
- **1 trials captain**
- **1–2 stewards**
- **4 experienced shooters**
- A few spectators at most

Each dog works for **10–12 minutes** in a set area. Dogs run one at a time under each judge.

Safety

Safety is the top priority.

- Everyone wears **blaze orange**
- Guns are fully briefed on **where, when, and what to shoot**
- The trials captain oversees all movement and communication
- Radios, first aid kit, and emergency plans are on site
- Only experienced, licensed shooters are used

The event is run quietly and professionally.

Impact on your farm

Spaniel trials are **low-impact** and respectful of your stock and land.

- Foot traffic only — no machinery
- Vehicles stay on tracks or where you direct
- No permanent markers or structures
- All game retrieved immediately
- No disturbance to stock
- No rubbish left behind
- The area is left as it was found

Handlers follow your instructions at all times.

Why your support matters

Without access to private land, spaniel trials simply couldn't run. Your support helps:

- Maintain high standards in working gundogs
- Promote safe, ethical dog handling
- Strengthen ties between rural communities and responsible dog owners

The clubs are genuinely grateful for the trust farmers place in them.

In short

A spaniel trial on your farm is:

- **Safe**
- **Controlled**
- **Low-impact**
- **Respectful of your land and stock**

If you'd like to know more or discuss hosting a trial, the club is always happy to talk.