

Results from 2026 Canadian National Master Retriever Survey

There was a great response to the survey, kudos for Jeff Morari for proposing it and helping in the design.

The vast majority of comments were very positive with compliments on various tests and several aspects that were especially appreciated. An excellent diversity of perspectives was also provided. There were also some consistent suggestions on a few areas of that could be improved, and those areas are being addressed by some additional guidance in the The National Master Hunt Test Stake, Philosophy and Judging Guidelines.

In addition, there were some differing views on the appropriate difficulty of tests and consistency of judging. As our goal was to obtain input for improvement, sample comments on specific events have had those details removed.

73 responses to the initial English version, 6 responses to French version.

Q1. What if any, has your role been with a Canadian national master? In what year(s)?

Competitor	46
Did you participate in 2023 Saskatoon event?	16
Did you participate in 2024 PEI event?	18
Did you participate in 2025 Vancouver Island event?	15
Did you participate in an earlier event?	30
Judge	9
Marshall	8
None of the above	6
Worker	26
Would like to participate someday	7

Q2. What was your overall level of satisfaction with the event(s)?

Approx 50 positive/very satisfied, some with caveats on specific events or issues, ie: Great goal to work towards. Its the "icing on the cake", after MH title. Very satisfied but too long waiting time in last series (over an hour in holding blinds in some cases so dogs very excited). Also best Nationals were ones where competitors could camp together.

Four were great one was okay, one was abysmal

In recent years, hunt tests have completely gone downhill. They do not simulate conditions met in the field at all. Many of the participants do not even hunt for real and treat it more like an obedience test.

Q3. What features of the National Master are the most important to you?

Most responses focused on good fellowship with other handlers, watching good dogs work, and social events.

Good grounds and fair, consistent judging (several comments on fair/consistent judging). Should adhere to CKC standards, which may need better definitions and training to improve consistency of the standards.

A few specifics: Information leading up to the test such as accommodations, schedule of events, what to expect as a new competitor. Would have liked more information on how to join in a pre-national training group as a new participant.

Q4. Was the advance information useful in planning your participation?

Near 100% agreement this was important/essential/useful. Pressure on accommodations in busy tourist areas was noted in a few.

Q5. Do you have any comments on the pre-training grounds?

Several comments on difficulties in few available areas at some events, recognizing the challenges to find additional land and especially water.. One recommendation for a sign-up sheet and management of pre-training area useage.

Q6. Do you have any comments on the social events? Meals, fundraising, etc?

Positive comments, noting different clubs/areas have different strengths and that adds to experiences.

Q7. Were the tests what you expected of a National event?

There were a much wider variety of perspectives. There were generally positive responses, but some who disagreed. Some examples

Yes, 2025 started fair and progressed to harder. Good atmosphere from participants.

Good atmosphere from participants. Previous Nationals started "hard" - tons of decoys and noise and LOTS of people went out on the first day. Very disappointing for people

driving far and sacrificing so much to get to the event. Easier to harder progression kept people engaged and increased the suspense as the days went on.

When tests are set up earlier in the week to carry as many dogs as possible, it sets a bad precedent for the end of the week when you get more of a National Level test. This is where your inconsistency in judging comes from when handlers perceived work judged differently on day 5 from day 1.

They were tougher than I expected but fair.

Yes, the tests were more challenging as the week went by, but overall, they were what should be expected at a National event.

More than what I expected ... first time for me and volunteered as gunner to get a great perspective of working teams

Some tests had visibility issues especially for blinds and if you were short (use of black stake in front of a forest, running up a hill to see your dog, tiny yellow ribbon). Some tests were over complicated. Very difficult to do clean. Guidelines say blinds should be visible recognizing some participants have visual issues.

Yes much better than some of the weekend tests I have been to in the last few years.

Often it seems that the judges go overboard in the last few days, setting tests that cannot be run cleanly.

Q8. Was the event well organized and efficient?

Overall very positive, with some caveats on delays in a few event or series.

And a few more detailed and substantive comments were sent to the Secretary, which in general reflected the general comments.

All comments and suggestions have been reviewed by the CNMRC Board and wherever possible are being incorporated into the Judging Guidelines to provide additional clarity for future events. Note the Guidelines have not been materially changed from the original, but more information on how to implement them was included.

A major need was for education of all involved to be sure all are on the same wavelength. Thus a walkthrough of the Guidelines will be implemented ahead of test set up to refresh each years judges. A walk through of Guidelines for the participants will also be organized to ensure all are aware of the approach.