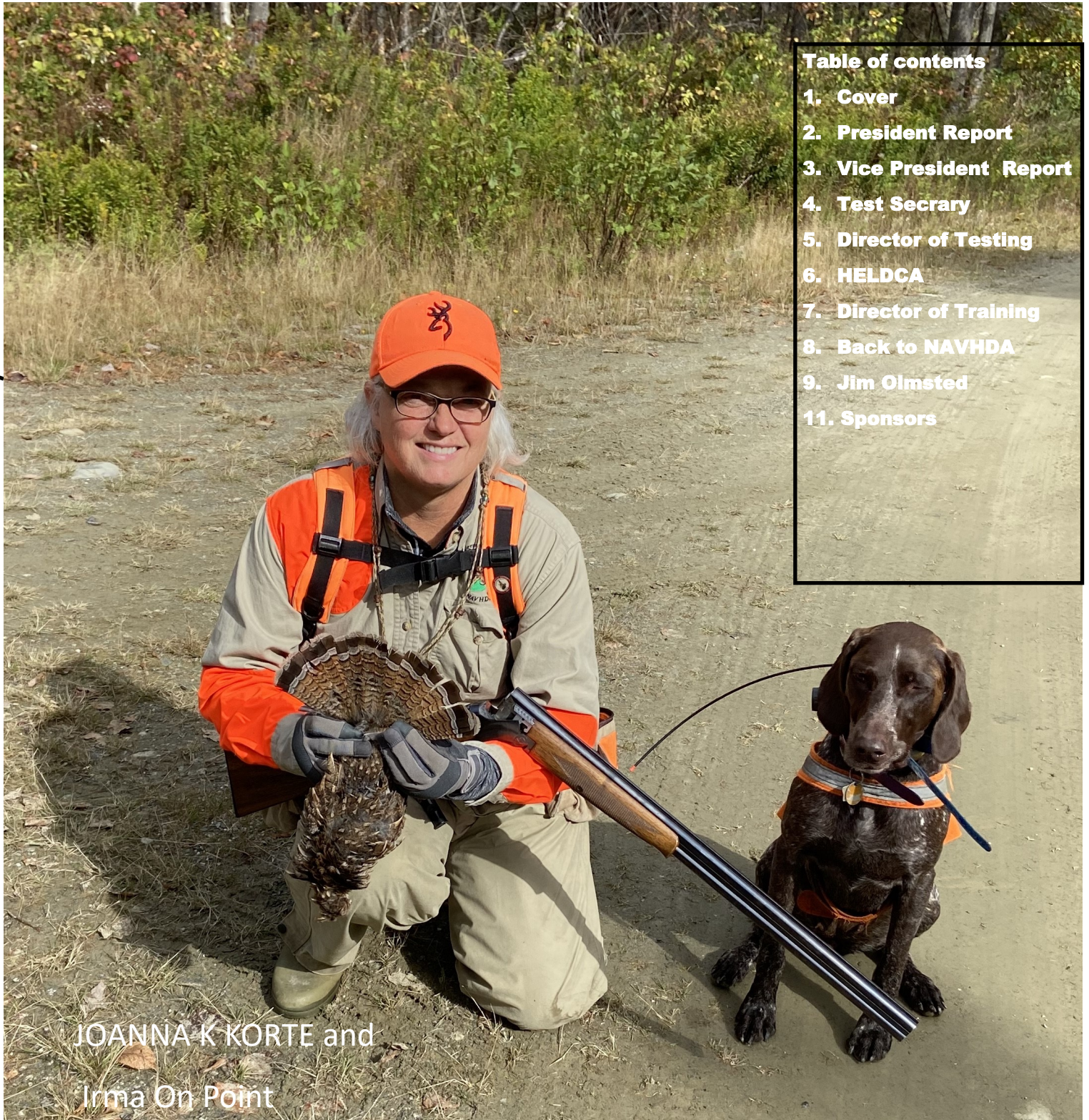




# Merrimack Valley NAVHDA News



Spring 2021



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JOANNA K KORTE and  
Irma On Point

## From the President

**John Korte**



Our training and testing season is upon us! It seems like new litters of puppies are on the ground everywhere and everyone wants to get involved in training and testing their versatile dogs judging by how quickly our May and September tests are filling up. Joanna and I have our work cut out for us this year. We have a new puppy, Korky, from our own On Point dog that I will be training and handling in both German and NAVHDA tests. Joanna is training her dog Maya for the Invitational being held in Iowa this September. If everything goes to plan, we will be preparing for 5 tests this year: four for me and one for Joanna. I love to train dogs but am not so fond of testing. Yikes!

I know we are all hoping for a more “normal” year in everything we do including at our NAVHDA events. That said, we still will remain vigilant until Federal, State, and local guidelines change. Our Covid protocol is posted front and center on our Merrimack Valley website. As guidelines evolve we will send notifications by email and revise our postings at [mnavhda.com](http://mnavhda.com).

Given the level of interest in our events this coming year our need for volunteers will even be greater. Gunners are especially needed as Casey Matthews, Director of Gunning, senior gunner Mike Trull, and myself are all testing dogs this year. We need time to focus on our dogs at training clinics which pulls us away from the Utility field. If you have an interest in gunning, please see Casey. All are welcome!

In the mean time, stay safe and I look forward to seeing you at our first training clinic on April 17<sup>th</sup>.



## **From the Vice President John Pella**

It is with great honor and commitment that I accept the office of Vice-President of the Merrimack Chapter of NAVHDA. I will devote my time and energy to ensure that the chapter has a successful year.

I first became smitten with hunting dogs in 2004 at the Madison Square Garden AKC show. When the Spinone Italiano came out for judging, I almost leap out of my seat. That led to my first two Spinone – Darby and Nigel. My first experience with NAVHDA began shortly after that when I met Dave and Carol Trahan at one of the AKC judging events. They explained to me the importance of training my hunting dogs and encouraged me to join my local Rappahannock chapter. I was also a member of the Spinone Club of America.

Since then I moved up to New Hampshire and now have a new Spinone dog named Leo and joined the Merrimack Chapter. Last year he trained and tested for Natural Ability and was awarded a Prize II. It's been a great experience thanks to the camaraderie and support from chapter members. And now that I'm fully retired, I have the opportunity to give back to the chapter and help the chapter to keep serving its members. I've volunteered to assist many of the clinics and test events in order to learn the incredible amount of work involved in ensuring these events go off as planned.

Through open communication and exchange of ideas among membership, we can ensure that both dogs and handlers reach their full potential and goals. So here's to working together to ensure a successful training and testing season (with great weather!) with great hospitality and great friendship.

John Pella, MPH

Vice President



## From the Director of Testing Jim Jiottis

### 2020 Testing

Like most events in 2020, our test days looked and felt different; however, unlike many 2020 events the club was able to successfully hold its spring and fall tests. Our ability to hold the tests was the result of hard work from all those involved in testing along with the respectful behavior of the handlers who attended.

The spring test was rescheduled to August 1 and 2, along with being limited to natural ability dogs. We tested 14 dogs over the two days, 13 dogs received a prize. Considering the uncertainty surrounding events during the Covid outbreak, our test went very well.

A short four weeks later, the club held its fall test on September 11, 12 and 13. The test was open to dogs of all levels. This allowed the club to test 31 dogs, 26 dogs received prizes. A new twist to this event included venues at multiple test sites in separate towns. As with the spring test, considering everything going on around us, the test was a success.

The club's ability to hold quality NAVHDA tests is directly related to the hard work of all those involved. This work begins long before the snow has melted with negotiating test dates and registration of dogs for the tests. It culminates with test day and the efforts put in by all workers, from morning check-in, gunners, judges, bird planters, bird wranglers, handler wranglers, merchandise sales to final clean-up. These folks deserve our gratitude!



**From the Test Secretary  
Joanna Korte**



Hello,

Both Spring and Fall test has been completely filled.

If you would like to be on the wait list for either test, please email me a note along with a completed test entry form. Inevitably someone drops from the tests for one reason or another.

**Important note:** Please be aware that we do our best to test as many dogs as we can in a test and therefore, **you may not run on your preferred day**. We have to organize our tests into certain numbers of dogs depending on the test levels (NA, UPT and UT). Please be flexible in your plans for the test weekend so that you can run on the day we can fit you in. All running days will be communicated one month prior to the test.

A few things to remember for both the clinics and the test days:

Bring your own dog water, and your lunch, snacks and drinks. Until COVID-19 precautions are changed, we will not be serving food or sharing drink coolers

Bring a folding chair to ensure we can properly distance ourselves

Bring essential field supplies, including a whistle, rain gear, bug spray, sun block, a leash and a bird bag if you have one

Dogs must be leashed when it is not their turn in the field or water

We need to help each other, especially during the clinics. Please be prepared to stay to help plant birds, etc.

**Very important! Please drive slowly, below 15 mph**, on Little Frost Rd (as you turn in from Rt. 9) and on Cressy Brook Rd (by the dam). These are residential roads with families and their pets living on them. Please be respectful! We represent our club, even as we are driving to and from the events.

Thank you and see you soon!

Joanna Korte

## From the HELDCA Representative at Large

**Geoff Gutt**



There was a delegate meeting on March 18th that I was unable to attend but was brought up to speed by John Korte and Dave Trahan. There was a letter from the Army Corp. that was received earlier that included these revisions to the lease which I will include here.

- **The Grantee shall conduct any mowing as directed by project staff and outlined in the annual mowing plan maps 1-5. This agreement is subject to termination if annual mowing plans are not followed as directed by project staff. Condition 18. n**
- **All invasive plant management must be approved in advance.**
- **Live fire events will be shut down immediately by project staff if all safety precautions are not followed. This includes signage at Dike H-3 and the canal leading to the Cressy Brook/H-3 area Condition 18. f.**
- **US Army Corps of Engineers “Pets on leash” policy will be followed at all locations outside of the licensed training area. No exceptions including, training permits issued by the State. Only 1 UTV or ATV will be authorized on the Cressy Brook field (Dike H-3) or beyond the sharps farm gate. No other vehicles are authorized beyond the designated parking area for any reason. UTV or ATV access will be limited to access and egress only when dropping off and picking up equipment. No Parking will be authorized. Condition 18. j.**

We were also unsuccessful in getting the staff gauge field on the dike side included in the lease. The Corp. would prefer to do that on a special use permit and at the moment getting it mowed is in limbo.

I expressed my displeasure to Steve Marcq the HELDCA president and received a lengthy reply which doesn't encourage me to believe that much will change in the Corp.'s position or HELCA's ability to negotiate better terms.

We will continue to press for our position on the leash policy and try to get the dike side mowed but we should also look for other grounds to train and test on.

Please drive slowly on Little Frost and Cressy Brook roads (15 mph).



Geoff Chauffeuring the judges.

## From the Director of Training Chris Doherty



Hi all,

I would like to thank Brian Silva for the work he has done as the chapter's Director of training for the past few years.

We have six training clinics this year to improve our dogs. Each one will be important for their continuing development. We will all need to work together at these clinics to make this a successful training season.

There are a few of points that I would like to address for this years clinics. First and most important, it is essential that members order their training birds through the chapter's website

no later than the Sunday preceding the training clinic. Orders placed after the deadline may not be filled. I will be ordering a few extra birds for each clinic, but they are mainly replacements for those that have died or escaped. The day's circumstances will determine if it is possible for those who did not pre-order to purchase of a few birds for training on that day, please order within the timeframe.

Secondly, please do not take it upon yourself to reach out to Foggy Ridge Game Bird Farm and add birds to the chapter's order. Jim & Laurie have been instructed not to accept any additions to the chapter's order from anyone other than Jim Jiottis or myself.

Lastly, there will be a few volunteers assigned to the bird trailer to bag birds. One of them will be available throughout the day to get the birds. After checking in, bring a bird bag to the trailer and one of the workers will give you your birds. Bird bags are available from the equipment trailer if needed. Please do not remove birds from the trailer.

I know that this is asking a lot, but it is important for the success of the day. I thank all of you for your understanding and patience

# BACK TO NAVHDA by VP. John Pella

After being in retirement for a number of years, friends suggested it was time to get back into the world of hunting dogs. I had raised two Spinone Italiano dogs so they helped me obtain a Spinone puppy last year just before the pandemic hit. Since I was a bit rusty on hunting dog training, there was no doubt that I would need to join Merrimack NAVHDA, my local chapter to determine the hunting potential of my new dog, Leo. As a handler, I needed to relearn how to train my new hunting dog in obedience, pointing birds, searching, tracking and retrieving downed birds. The Merrimack chapter's motto is: "We help train you so that you can train your dog". Perfect!!

So where to begin? Well, one starts at the very beginning with the Natural Ability Testing. Training with Dave Trahan of On Point Kennels and the formal Training Day Clinic proved to be instrumental in preparing for the formal test. Working as a volunteer during clinic and test days was very helpful and watching the procedure in action as well as having the chance to speak with other club members about their dogs and experiences. I found that volunteering was the best learning experience and it's the foundation of our association. It's a great way to socialize with other passionate dog owners too. The craziest result of volunteering was that I learned I had a passion for planting birds in the field!

The chapter's newsletter and website were very informative detailing how training clinics are run and what occurs during the day so I knew what to expect. There was even information of what I needed to bring that day for me and my dog and suggestions for footwear (soggy fields with thick mud). At the beginning of the day, one of the clinic trainers gave an overview of the day's activities and how the day would proceed which was very helpful – no surprises. The newsletter is an incredible source of information ranging from meetings, training clinics,

## NA Test



OWNER: JOHN J PELLA FRAZIER NORTHERN QUEST'S BELLO RAGAZZO LEONARDO (Male) SP-003107

WHELPED: 12/24/2019 CHAPTER TST DATE YR MOS N S W P T D C POINTS PRIZE MER NA 09/11/20 0 -8 4 4 4 4 2 4 3 106 II

HANDLER: JOHN J PELLA COAT-Medium Dense Medium Harsh



## **Jim Olmsted - Owner of Foggy Ridge Game Bird Farm**

By John Korte, Chris Doherty, and John Pella



John Korte, Chris Doherty, and John Pella recently paid a visit to Foggy Ridge Game Bird Farm in Warren, Maine, and here is our report.

Meet Jim Olmsted, owner of Foggy Ridge Game Bird Farm, one of the unsung heroes and a foundation of our training clinics and tests. Jim, his wife Laurie, and daughter and son in-law, are responsible for breeding, procuring, feeding and growing, and delivering our chukars, pheasants, and ducks for each of our events. According to Jim, he has been at this and growing his business since he was 14 years old, and now has accumulated numerous incubators, hatching rooms, breeding rooms, chick rearing rooms, feed storage units, and outdoor pens. His passion for his business is evident if not backbreaking and labor intensive, requiring 12-plus hour days, midnight crate packing for deliveries, and long treks across all of New England delivering birds. Treks to Pennsylvania, Maryland and other points south for pickup of eggs, chicks, or mature birds are regular events as well to maintain a continued and sustained supply to a vast number of dog clubs and preserves.

Supplying birds is no trivial activity requiring both farming and business acumen, to assure a cost effective product, delivered at the right time, and with the appropriate return. For Jim, the planning and investments he is making today are for bird deliveries 18 months from now. Nearly the full investment cost in birds is realized at some risk 12 months or more out from delivery (and payment!) due to advance purchase of grain contracts, propane contracts, and equipment/property maintenance and upgrades. Fully 65% or so of bird costs are for food and grain. This makes for some tricky work as commodity prices can fluctuate wildly over short periods of time. That can influence our cost to the Chapter and an appropriate and fair profit for Jim.

Understandably, 2020 was a tough year for Jim due to the pandemic and related uncertainty. NAVHDA Chapters helped by taking birds for personal use according to our prior year forecasts, in lieu of taking birds for Chapter events. Fall was particularly painful for Foggy Ridge due to demand not matching production.

This caused caution for overwinter breeding/production into 2021, resulting in leaner, beginning of the year bird numbers.

Jim states that spring pheasants are always challenging, as they are difficult to overwinter and breed. Spring egg or chick purchases require travel and significant expense. The males are highly aggressive in the spring (mating season) so mortality of both males and females is always an issue.

We now have a new appreciation of the complicated work that is involved in game bird farming. We didn't realize the number of variables involved in game bird farming that must be considered when setting a price for the birds we order. We never considered that weather many months out could affect grain crops, and therefore unexpected increases in feed costs. Fluctuations in costs for electricity and fuel for hatcheries, incubators, warm room brooders, lighting, and ventilation systems add additional risk.

Jim spoke at length about raising game birds and the unprecedented issues he faced last year and echoed similar news reports from last summer involving America's livestock farms. It seems that both the game bird supply chain and our beef and pork supply chains faced some of the same issues. Sometime in early autumn, Jim must plan out the entire following year's schedule for the anticipated number of birds he will need for deliveries. Each stage of the process is precisely timed, from his first delivery or rearing of eggs, through incubation, hatchling, juvenile, and adult stages. It is a conveyor line in constant forward movement and only stops when the mature flock has been shipped. Even when orders are canceled, the line continues producing. This is the kind of situation that will keep a farmer up at night. Jim has done his best in trying to predict what he will need for this year, but we all should stay flexible with our expectations of the training birds that we order.

Being a small operation farmer involves a lot of dirty, smelly work. It takes a special person that really enjoys that kind life and to do all of the long hard work required. Even after all the years Jim has been running his farm, he still enjoys just sitting and watching his ducks flapping and waddling around in their pen. People like Jim & Laurie are disappearing and sadly, there are not many others that want to take their place. Jim & Laurie have our appreciation and our many thanks go out to all at Foggy Ridge Game Bird Farm.

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