**Bird Liberating**
**by Lyle Johnson, AKC Executive Field Representative**
The success of a field trial is determined by a good bird planting.

The bird planter should check the wind and plant birds on the side of objectives that dogs will reach to. If birds are liberated on the far side, it is next to impossible for a dog to scent them at a distance.

Birds must never be planted on the path, as almost any dog will find and point them. Occasionally a bird may get loose from the bird planter and land by the path, however, this should be a rare occasion. The ideal is for a dog to reach to objectives that will show a dog with hunting know-how. The AKC staff liberated all of the birds at the AKC Pointing Breed Gun Dog Championship in Danville, Va. Only a handful of dogs went bird-less out of around 100 entries. We liberated 25 birds in the morning to salt the one-hour course and four after every brace. We also liberated a dozen before the afternoon braces as we took a long lunch hour. This made for a very pleasing trial and was just great for the Judges and handlers.

A handler must show the dog on game and be shot over to place in any trial except the puppy stake.

In some of the hunting tests when the weather is very dry and hot, the bird planters will lightly spray water on the birds or wet down the bird bag so the birds will give off more scent. Birds put down for the retrieve should not be placed with the heads under the wings, as this is an artificial set up and a good dizzying should do the job. Otherwise, you could have dogs pointing birds as close as a foot away. If you have volunteered to liberate birds and have a dog entered in that stake, only do so after your dog(s) have run.

To have a successful trial or a hunting test, you must have adequate birds on the courses.