

- SUBJECT:** Competitive hunting dog events on TPWD-controlled land
- COMMITTEE:** State Recreational Resources — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Kuempel, Siebert, Black, Hightower, Horn, Rabuck, B. Turner, Woolley
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Oakley
- WITNESSES:** For — Lee Caldwell, Michael Staggs, Eddie Fewder, Texas State Coon Hunters Association
- Against — Ellis Gilleland
- BACKGROUND:** In 1988 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department issued a moratorium on the use of public lands for competitive hunting dog events, such as coon hunts and game bird field trials. The moratorium resulted from a liability issue stemming from the destruction of a participant's hunting dog by a neighboring landowner, who was ordered to pay restitution to the owner of the dog.
- DIGEST:** HB 670 would authorize the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to permit a person to hold or participate in a competitive hunting dog event, including a field trial, in an area controlled by the department and designated by the commission as a public hunting area.
- Participants in the field trials would be prohibited from using firearms in the event or taking the wildlife that is the object of the event.
- Participation in a field trial event would not preclude an dog owner from hunting with the dog during a designated hunting season. The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 670 would simply allow the TPWD to revive an event it once permitted: game bird field trials, retriever trials, coon hunts and other

competitive hunting events on wildlife management areas. The events were conducted in a professional manner and during a period when the activity did not conflict with other public use or departmental operations.

The clear language of the bill would provide accountability and assure that TPWD controlled the property, that no firearms were used and that no wildlife was taken.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Allowing dogs to chase and capture raccoons and other live animals is cruel and should not be condoned by state agencies or allowed on state land.

The liability issue has not been solved; if an animal is injured on state property during one of these field trial events, questions of liability could still arise.