



Apprentice & Sponsor Guidelines

The Government's Expectations

WAC 220-420-070 only tells us that the sponsor must agree to assist the applicant in learning about the husbandry and training of raptors held for falconry, relevant wildlife laws and regulations, and in deciding what permitted raptor species is appropriate to possess while an apprentice falconer.

WFA's Expectations

The sponsor and the apprentice have **three core principles** to which they must adhere, and the sponsor should only graduate the apprentice when these principles are met without supervision.

- 1. The apprentice is not a danger to the bird**
- 2. The apprentice does not make the bird a danger to the public**
- 3. The apprentice follows the law**

The Sponsor's Authority

The apprentice must prioritize their sponsor's advice. The sponsor must make their methods clear. Apprentices must not trust advice without running it by their sponsor first. Apprentices lack the experience to foresee how one technique might conflict with another.

Active Mentorship

"Paper-only" sponsorship does a disservice to the sport. Sponsors should be physically present to help the apprentice learn to man, equip, train, and hunt with the apprentice and their bird.

Clear Graduation Requirements

Sponsors should make their own requirements for graduating the apprentice clear at the beginning. Sponsors should make requirements objective. Examples might be a minimum field time or a specific amount of game the apprentice is expected to catch. Sponsors should not be using apprentices for free labor.

Hunting Mindset

Falconry is strictly a hunting sport, not pet keeping. Sponsors should be demonstrating success in the field and hunting with the apprentice often.

Equipment Oversight

Sponsors should make recommendations on all equipment and should physically inspect housing, equipment, and furniture regularly.

Raptor Health

Apprentices must secure an avian vet prior to trapping. Sponsors should track the apprentice's bird's weight, health, and behavior.

Personal Responsibility

The apprentice is ultimately responsible for the bird's well-being. They must exhaust books and research personally. They must be financially responsible for the bird.

Responsible Discretion

Apprentices lack the experience to handle public scrutiny. Sponsors should filter decisions about giving public presentations, interviews, or posting online to avoid negative ramifications.

Hunting Ground Ethics

Apprentices must not: over hunt, hunt outside agreed parameters, or hunt without permission spots shown to them. Sponsors should encourage apprentices to contribute by independently finding, scouting, and evaluating their own hunting areas.

Dispute Resolution

If a disagreement arises between the apprentice and sponsor, the parties are welcome to use WFA's director at large as an objective party to resolve the dispute.