



Working Trials Article

What is 'Working Trials'?

Probably, the easiest way to describe the sport of Working Trials is to say that it is all the exercises that are required of operational police dogs, but carried out under test conditions and open to all.

When we talk about the sport being open to all, from a competitor's point of view that is very much the case, anybody who is fit enough can take part. We currently have people in their 80's regularly competing! Sadly there are few younger people taking up the sport - probably due to the amount and cost of travelling.

From a dog's point of view, as long as the dog is 18 months of age and registered with the Kennel Club it can compete. Mixed breed dogs can be placed on the 'working register' to comply with this requirement.

Working Trials are regulated by the Kennel Club, who are guided by the Working Trials Council, who meet bi-annually. The 'I' regulations are the 'bible' of the sport.

The ultimate goal for many trialists is to gain their dog(s) the coveted Working Trials Champion title; by winning two Challenge Certificates at Championship Tracking Dog and/or Patrol Dog stakes. So, how does one achieve this?

There is a graduated progression through the 'stakes'. There are two main levels of qualification, Open and Championship. A dog has to qualify at an Open trial before you can compete at Championship level (with the exception of C.D. which can be entered at Championship level).

There are five 'stakes'. The simplistic definition of these is:-

Companion Dog (C.D.):

Group 1: Control. Consists of basic heelwork, on and off lead, recall to handler, sendaway, and sit and down stays, out of sight of the handler.

Group 2: Agility: There are three elements to this section. A clear jump, long jump, and scale a vertical wooden wall. Heights and length can be adjusted to suit the size of the dog (in C.D. and U.D. only)., but are usually 3 foot clear, 9 feet long and 6 feet scale.

Group 3: Nosework: Consists of the location and retrieval of three articles bearing human scent from a marked out area 15 yards square. The retrieval of a dumbbell is also included in this group in C.D. only.

Utility Dog (U.D.) and Working Dog (W.D.):

Control and Agility groups are basically the same, ie. Heel free, Sendaway, Retrieve a dumbbell, 10 minute down stay and steadiness to gunshot. Agility is the standard three elements.

Nosework consists of a track (the following of a human scent trail) approx. ½ mile long and the recovery of two articles placed on the line of the track, and a search for and retrieval of four articles from a 25 yard square area. The U.D. track is ½ hour old and the W.D. track is 1½ hours old.

Tracking Dog (T.D.) and Patrol Dog (P.D.) nosework varies from the other stakes, the P.D. track has two articles and is 2 hours old, and the T.D. track has 3 articles and is 3 hours old.

The Control sections vary as well. Both stakes have a speak on command in place of the retrieve, and the sendaway also includes redirection(s) of the dog.

The Patrol Dog stake also includes a 'patrol' group, which tests the dog's in a number of search and locate (persons), and test of courage exercises.

In all the stakes a minimum of 70% of the marks must be achieved in each group and an overall mark of 80% is required to qualify at each level.

Trials are held throughout the year, and may be held on farmland, either pasture or arable, or common land, e.g. Lauder common, New Forrest.

There are a number of clubs throughout the country that not only host trials, but also hold training sessions (Details can be obtained from the Kennel Club.).

One club a year hosts the Kennel Club Championships, which is held in October, this is the 'show case' of the sport, two stakes run at this trial T.D. and P.D., and dogs have to qualify to compete by winning a Challenge Certificate at a Championship trial.

Working Trials is a great sport that requires a lot of time and access to farmland to train the dogs, but is hugely rewarding, and builds a wonderful bond between dog and handler.

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