



AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB®

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE TO AKC COURSING ABILITY TEST (CAT)

By
**HERDING, EARTHDOG AND LURE
COURSING COMMITTEE OF THE
AKC
DELEGATE BODY**

Since the inception of the AKC Coursing Ability Test (known as the “CAT”) these events have grown very rapidly in popularity with lovers of all dog breeds. With this rapid growth, we have seen many new exhibitors to the sport of lure coursing and the addition of many new clubs holding these fun events.

With this growth, the Herding, Earthdog and Lure Coursing Committee (HEC) of the AKC Delegate Body (the governing body of AKC) has collected from the dog fancy, insights into what makes an

excellent event for exhibitors, dogs and the hosting clubs. In this short flyer, we provide a summary of this input from our community. Much of this input is applicable to all lure coursing events both the CAT and sighthound breed lure coursing trials.



SAFETY

Lure coursing events are a fun event but as a prey driving sport and because of the nature of fields and courses there is always a concern for the safety of the dog. All decisions made concerning an event should always be based on what is safe for our dogs.

The club shall have a veterinary clinic or a veterinarian on call whose name, address and telephone number shall appear in the premium list. The premium should include phone number, address and directions to the clinic. Veterinary assistance shall be available within a reasonable time and/or distance. Remember many of our events are on weekends and you should check to be sure the veterinarian listed is available. Dogs may wear any type of collar except choker collars, a collar with prongs or an

electronic training collar. The collar should be snug to minimize the chances of catching on something during the run.

Hanging tags pose a safety concern and it is suggested that tags should be taped up. Owners may have their dog wear a muzzle if they desire. Owners may use clips or rubber bands to hold the dog’s hair.



CLUBS

Adding lure coursing events to a club’s quiver of dog events has been an excellent way to attract new people into the world of dog sports as well as adding to their membership rolls. Adding CAT events for existing lure coursing clubs has proven to be beneficial to the club as well as to participants in these events.

The HEC strongly encourages clubs interested in becoming active in hosting CAT events to approach local lure coursing clubs for expertise and to gain experience in hosting these events. Existing AKC coursing clubs are encouraged to work with other dog clubs

to host events. In many areas of the country lure coursing clubs have partnered with conformation show clubs to host CAT events at show sites.

The best way to start growing interest in your area is to host “fun” run practice days. The practices do not require full courses. Simple straight runs can be used to prepare dogs to be successful on a course.

THE FIELD COMMITTEE

In traditional lure coursing events the AKC licensed judge is responsible for complete knowledge of the regulations. With the addition of the Coursing Ability Test Evaluator, many of the judge’s responsibilities now fall to the Field Committee.

The field committee must be fully knowledgeable of coursing regulations. The committee is responsible for the layout of the course to assure it abides by the CAT rules and more importantly is safe for all dogs – all sizes and all breeds. Additional Field Committee concerns include:

- Roll Call should commence promptly at published time
- Event to commence promptly at published time
- Encourage participation and repeat entries

- Offer “New Title” ribbons
- Ensure competent lure operation
- Field Trial Secretary assigns time slots as entries are received
- Include Canine Partner forms in Premium List
- Have comprehensive Premium Lists
- Rolling entry possibility to accommodate various schedules
- Define what “Inspection is” (especially needed for non-sighthound clubs that are offering CAT)
- Include Definitions of Misconduct in Premium List
- Be cognizant of grass and string height. A string just a few inches off the ground may be too high up the legs of shorter breeds such as a French Bulldog or Dachshund for example
- Be careful about terrain - don't put a turn just over a small hill a small dog won't see the bag turn.
- Encourage fencing and/or natural barrier for fields when possible.
- Set up courses in way that has the start and stop locations close together
- Avoid multiple 90 degree turns. Getting faster dogs around such turns is much more difficult

A critical member of the field committee is the Huntmaster. The Huntmaster will be in complete charge of all hounds and handlers on the field and shall cause the lure to be stopped in any potentially dangerous situation and signal the handler(s) to retrieve their hound(s) when appropriate or when necessary for the safety of the hound(s). The Huntmaster shall make at least one pilot run of the lure before the first course of the day and again upon reversing or changing the course layout.

THE FIELD AND COURSE

Items noted about field and the course include:

LURE OPERATING

The lure operator can make or break any lure coursing event. Their primary responsibility is to assure the safety of the dog and to operate the lure to maximize the success of all types of dogs on the course. Any good lure operator has learned that all breeds, all dogs and all courses are different. It is not as easy as it might look.

Experienced clubs and lure operators play an essential role in training new people to be lure operators. Lure operating at CAT events is an excellent way to gain experience for lure operating at any event.

We asked a lure operator at the AKC lure coursing national event why they lure operated. Three reasons were given: “I have the best seat in the house; through the lure I directly interact with beautiful athletic dogs; with the dog we can orchestrate a beautiful sight; I get to see the dogs be smarter than me”.



JUDGES AND COURSE EVALUATORS

While the Field Committee has primary responsibility for knowledge of rules and the safety of the field and course, the Judge and Course Evaluators need to also be familiar with CAT regulations. Before beginning his/her assignment, the judge shall walk the course to verify that the course plan is safe, e.g. checking for proximity of course to fencing and other obstacles, turns not sharper than allowed and holes in ground along the course, etc. If the Judge has concerns, these should be communicated to the Field Committee. It is the Field Committee's responsibility to ensure safe conditions. Your event can be ruined by having a dog injured because of poor course design. Judges should refrain from personal distractions such as texting and cell phone use during each run.

At the handlers meeting at the beginning of the event the judge/course evaluators should explain what they are looking for in a successful run of the course.

OWNERS/EXHIBITORS

Some pointers for the owners:

- Ensure their dog is fit to run. If there are two events in a day your dog may run as much as 1200 yards
- Understand the Rules.
- Be prompt to the line. Clubs should make sure events start on time. If exhibitors at a 60-dog event each take an extra minute to get to the line, the event runs an hour longer.
- Encourage that their dog has relieved itself prior to running (doing so on the field results in a no-pass judgment)
- Volunteer to help.
- Encourage Recall. While there may be no penalty for taking numerous minutes to recover your dog, the embarrassment factor will encourage a better recall.