

AKC Judges' Newsletter September & October 2009

Dear Tracking Judges,

2009 AKC National Tracking Invitational

This year's event was held on the beautiful grounds of the [Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest](#) in Clermont, Kentucky, what a wonderful setting for such a prestigious event. Our judges Fran Smith, Jerry Lewis, Terri Everwine and Ron Simmons along with the tracklayers did an outstanding job of utilizing the grounds for ten excellent tracks.

Please visit the AKC website for complete event and photo coverage [2009 AKC National Tracking Invitational](#).

Junior Handlers in Companion Events – Attention ALL Judges

The Companion Events staff is pleased to encourage Junior Handlers in the sports of Obedience, Agility, Rally and Tracking. In these Companion Events, any Junior Handler up to the age of 18 is eligible to compete as a Junior.

We need judges to assist us in promoting participation and understanding of the Junior Handler program. The Junior Handler Certificate is available by clicking the following link: [Junior Handler Certification](#). Please print off some copies to have available for juniors that show to you who may not have the forms or may be new to AKC Events.

These forms are to be signed by the judge when a Junior Handler passes at a test. Additionally these certificates may be signed by an AKC Rep or Trial Secretary. If a Junior Handler asks to have a form signed for at a test in which they did not qualify kindly explain to them the form only needs to be completed at tests in which they and their dog pass.

Building Positive Relationships – One Tracking Enthusiast at a time

A tracking fancier writes:

"I just signed on to teach a Beginning Tracking Class at the University for their Continuing Ed program. I had a meeting with the V.P. in charge of University Relations to see if we could have our VST test and a Seminar on the Campus. He suggested I talk with the Continuing Ed people about teaching tracking. To make a long story short when I went to them they were very interested. Today I signed on for a course in Sept., Oct., & Nov. I wonder if anyone else has done this. It is a good way to promote Tracking to the outside world. The class will be listed in their catalog of classes. Hope we can stir up some interest."

The Dog's Nose – Another Remarkable Story from the Family Dog magazine

Questions from the Field

Who has responsibility concerning loose and disruptive dogs at a test?

Answer: In tracking – incidences that take place on the tracking field is the judge's responsibility much like the ring in obedience the obedience judge's responsibility. While judges have the primary responsibility regarding problems occurring on the tracking field, they do not have sole jurisdiction, read on.

Dog attacks or attempts to attack a person on the tracking field - Judges must disqualify the dog.

The Trial Secretary has the necessary "Disqualification for Attacking" form to file. If it is a stray dog and not a dog associated with anyone at the test the incidence should be written up in the judge's book and in the test report but the disqualification form does not need to be completed.

Dog attacks another dog on the tracking field – If one of the dogs is a stray dog not associated with anyone at the test the incidence should be written up in the judge's book and in the test report but the official forms do not need to be completed.

If the attacking dog is associated with someone at the test and is entered the judge's would "Excuse" the dog, mark the judges' book as such stating the reason for the excusal and complete the "Dog on Dog Attack" form.

If the attacking dog is associated with someone at the test and there is injury as a result of the attack the Event Committee must investigate and follow the procedure as outlined below.

Dog attacks a person or dog, with injury, off the tracking field but at the site – if it is a stray dog and does not belong to any one at the test site a report of the incident should be included in the Test Report but no official forms need to be filled out.

If it is a dog that belongs to someone at the test site the Event Committee must investigate the incident, and complete the “Disqualification by Event Committee” form. This is an informal investigation to collect information from all parties involved and any witnesses. The Event Committee then meets to discuss the incident and may disqualify the dog.

Additionally the Event Committee may determine there was potential misconduct (failure to properly control a dog at an event) to warrant preliminary investigations regarding misconduct on the part of the handler/owner.

Tracking Regulations – At the July Board of Directors meeting the Board approved recommendations from the 2008 Tracking Advisory Committee and the Companion Events Staff. [Board of Directors Meeting - July 2009](#)

VST Approved Sites and Alternates

Clubs go through a formal process to be granted approval for a specific number of tracks at each VST event site. Site approval is based upon information submitted by the involved club. Internal and external Companion Events staff reviews this information prior to any approval.

At the inception of VST several sites were approved for a maximum number of six (6) tracks as that was the maximum number clubs were allowed to offer. Some of these sites may need to be reviewed to meet the needs of our sport based on regulation changes. Clubs will need to submit the necessary information for this review.

Test sites are approved for a maximum number of tracks. That maximum includes the potential for an alternate track. Under no circumstances may a club offer or run more tracks than a site is approved for. To do so not only jeopardizes the clubs' position for approval of future tests but the integrity in the consistency and character of the tracks laid if a complaint is filed.

If a site is approved for six (6) VST tracks the club has two options:

1. They may apply for five (5) tracks to allow the option of having one (1) alternate available or
2. They may apply for six (6) tracks with the understanding that no alternate will be available.

The plotting of an alternate track is considered part of the maximum total an area is approved for. The plotting of an alternate at VST tests is not required.

The *Tracking Regulations* are clear regarding the plotting and use of an alternate track at tests. Chapter 2, Section 5 clearly states: “Judges are encouraged to plot an alternate track in case a retest of one of the dogs is required or in case one of the tracks becomes invalidated.” Only one alternate track is permitted by the *Tracking Regulations*. Further reading of the same section states: “The priority for use of an alternate track is to replace a fouled track.”

Do you Remember the First Time you Laid Tracks?

My wife and I traveled this past weekend to our first tracking test. We volunteered to be track layers at our National Specialty. We spent weeks of Tuesday mornings working with some local trackers getting to know how to track lay, plot maps, count off steps, walk straight, etc. I laid tracks 1 and 7 – and my wife laid track 2. The test was 9 tracks, including the alternate.

First lesson learned: Duct Tape is a track layer's BEST friend!! The fields being used were filled with dead grass, weeds, and foxtails. Taking our instructors advice, we covered our shoes, laces, etc with tape. After having walked my first track, I quickly learned that the tape should also go around the bottom of your pant legs, sealing the bottom to your shoe, thus creating no way for anything to get between your pants and shoes. They make “gaiters” that wrap around your legs and cover over the tops of your shoes that the “experts” were wearing – we'll be getting us some pairs of those ☺

Second lesson learned: Don't rely just upon distant visual cues of where your turns are located. We had spent a lot of time learning how to triangulate our turns to three separate markers, but you also need to write down just as many ground location cues as possible. The distant markers work when you're standing at the turn, but as the track layer, you're often as much as one full turn back from the judges (who are that far back again

from the handler/dog), who then ask you to confirm where the turn is located. Splotches of green, a unique looking weed, and the occasional rock became very important ☺ They say it is a “sinking feeling” to be out there as an exhibitor with nothing but your start and 30 yard flag – I can now tell you as a track layer, the same feeling applies – as I walked the track “for real”, verifying my markers and pulling up the flags from the day before, the thought crossed my mind, “Am I going to be able to find this trail again if need-be?” ☺☺

I ended up assisting the exhibitor on my track 1, whose dog didn’t work out the first turn. My plotting worked and I was able to help her complete the track while the judges moved onto track 2. The dog running my track 7 didn’t go much beyond the 30 yard flag and actually ended up at the vets with a foxtail in its ear. I was able to follow my track back from where I walked out using my map’s markers to retrieve the glove ☺

Third lesson: Don’t give up!! Several of the dogs took a long time to either get started off the first flag and/or work out a turn, but most persevered and continued on. Having said that, “it” happens to the best of them – several of the “not todays” were because the dog ventured off and never quite made it back and we had one that was so “hot on the trail” he walked right over the glove and continued to track the “out path”. We had 3 qualify of the 9 who ran (two dogs from the same handler) – 33%, which I gather is great for a TD test.

Remember, You Make it Work!

Your continuing efforts to judge in a friendly, courteous, impartial and consistent manner are appreciated by exhibitors, clubs and the Companion Events Department.

Comments, Questions, or Suggested Topics

Please feel free to send any comments or suggestions for future topics to [Tracking](#)

Sincerely,
Curt Curtis, AVP Companion Events
and the Field Staff – Diane Schultz, and Betty Winthers

If you know of a tracking judge who is not getting the newsletters, please have them contact Lisa Strickland at 919-816-3816 or at [Lisa Strickland](#).