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February 2006 Tracking Judges' Newsletter

Happy Valentine's Day to all of you die-hard trackers! Even though it is February and most people in the country are tucked in their homes next to the fire, you are out taking advantage of the cold and snow and training in "not so ideal" tracking conditions. Just a few items to discuss this month:

Tracking Regulations, Chapter 1, Section 16:

"The club must provide judges with ground maps, roughly to scale, of the tracking areas showing the major features of terrain and boundaries about sixty (60) days prior to the tracking test."

It is now much easier to comply with this requirement with the availability of a couple of websites; www.googleearth.com will allow you to subscribe to Google Earth Plus (\$20). The program has several tools that will allow you to plot a track on the aerial photo and it provides the exact length of each leg and a total. Not all parts of the country are available in the highest magnification. Many of the photos are in color.

A second site is www.teraserver.microsoft.com. This site is free and provides a scale for all magnifications. Just about the whole US is covered, but the maps are in gray scale.

Tracking certifications and aggressive dogs

We have had a couple of reports of judges being bitten or threatened while conducting a TD certification. Should that happen, the dog is NOT to be certified and a report of the incident should be sent to the AKC immediately. Please send the report to Companion Events for review. This information is considered important and should not be overlooked. While a certification is not an actual event, all dogs must be certified in order to enter a tracking test, judges should consider an attack or attempted attack serious and it should be reported so as to possibly prevent the same situation happening at an actual event.

Articles

Articles seem to be a cloudy area for many judges since the Regulations were changed in 2005. Some judges do not have a clear understanding of the types of articles that can be used in all of the various tests that are offered. Clubs, judges, and tracklayers are becoming increasingly creative in the types of articles that they use. While this is acceptable, articles must still meet the requirements in the Regulations. We have compiled all of the sections that pertain to articles from the Regulations so the differences in each section will be more apparent.

Chapter 2, Section 6. Articles. Judges will approve all articles well in advance of the time the track is laid so that any article that is not acceptable can be replaced. The article(s) will have been in the tracklayer's possession for sufficient time to ensure that it is impregnated with the tracklayer's scent. All articles will be inconspicuous in color in comparison to the surrounding terrain. All articles are to be



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about the same size as a glove or a wallet. The tracklayer will drop articles on the track. After being dropped, an article should not be visible from a distance of more than 20 feet and will not be covered with any substance to conceal it.

Chapter 3, Section 5. Article for a Tracking Dog Test. Chapter 2, Section 6, sets forth the criteria for articles. In a TD test, the article **will be** a glove or a wallet.

Chapter 3, Section 6. Start. The start will have a flag at the beginning and a second flag 30 yards from the first flag indicating the direction of the first leg. The tracklayer will begin at least ten (10) yards from the starting flag, lining up with the starting flag and the second flag. The tracklayer will proceed along this line ensuring there is no turn at the starting flag. While walking this line, the tracklayer will pause momentarily at the first flag, drop the start article, then continue walking the track in the manner specified in Chapter 2, Section 10. **The start article must be made of cloth and must be the approximate size of a glove or wallet.** Each tracklayer must prepare an extra start article and have it readily available in the event the start article is not located. The handler may pick up the article at the starting flag and use it to give scent to the dog while on the track.

Chapter 4, Section 6. Articles for a Tracking Dog Excellent Test. The criteria for articles as contained in Chapter 2, Section 6, apply. The TDX test articles will consist of four (4) personal, dissimilar articles, **about the same size** as a glove or wallet, that are to be dropped on the track by the tracklayer at the points indicated on the judges' charts. Only the last article **may be** a glove or a wallet. The first article will be dropped at the starting flag and will be clearly visible to the handler. The next two (2) articles will be dropped at wide intervals directly on the track at the places designated by the judges and marked on the chart. The fourth article will be dropped at the end of the track. Articles will be dropped more than thirty (30) yards from a turn, an obstacle, or a cross-track.

Chapter 5, Section 5. Articles for Variable Surface Tracking Test. The VST test articles will consist of four (4) dissimilar, common, everyday items that can be easily carried by the tracklayer and safely picked up by the dog. **Each article will not be smaller than 2" x 4" or larger than 5" x 5" and will weigh no more than 8 ounces.** There will be one leather, one plastic (rigid or semi-rigid), one metal, and one fabric article, which will be handled by the tracklayer and will be dropped on the track by the tracklayer at the points indicated on the judges' charts. The first article will be fabric or leather. The last article will be clearly and temporarily marked with the number "4." The first article will be dropped at the starting flag and will be clearly visible to the handler. The next two (2) articles will be dropped at wide intervals directly on the track at the places designated by the judges and so marked on the chart. One article must be dropped in one of the areas devoid of vegetation. The fourth article will be dropped at the end of the track. The articles must be approved by the judges prior to the laying of the track. The second, third, and fourth articles must be presented to the judges by the handler following the completion of the track. No article will be dropped less than *twenty (20)* yards from a turn *except as indicated in Section 4, #6*. The judges will mark a dog "Passed" if an article is not found and cannot be located by the judges or the tracklayer, provided that the dog worked continuously and intently along the actual track. Should a dog find additional articles along the track, the dog will not be failed and will be permitted to continue.



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Please Note: Tracklayers must prepare an extra start article and have it readily available in the event the start article cannot be located. This applies to all tests – TD, TDX and VST. No article(s) can be used which can be considered a toy, such as a teddy bear, stuffed animal, etc.

Protective Clothing

Sometimes it is difficult to determine what type of “protective clothing” for dogs is allowed on the tracking field. The current *Tracking Regulations* allow a protective coat to be worn by the dog provided the coat and the harness are put on the dog in the presence of both judges. We have provided examples of coats in this newsletter to help judges get a clearer image of some of the clothing that is acceptable.

Ultimately, it will be up to you and your co-judge to determine if the coat is compliance with Chapter 2, Section 24 and that it does not aid the dog on the track.

Ex: “Protective Clothing”





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This about covers the news in tracking this month, Spring is just around the corner, with its warmer temperatures and longer days. More time for tracking! If you have any questions or need further clarification in any of these matters, please contact Companion Events. We will be happy to assist your. Until next time, Happy Judging! **Do Not Reply To This Email!**