

GETTING INTO TRIALS

Denise gives us a more in-depth view and explains, there are three main groups of exercises, in all the stakes;

Introductory, (ID) Companion Dog, (CD); Utility Dog (UD); Working Dog (WD); Tracking Dog (TD), in addition to these, the Patrol Dog (PD) stake includes a set of Man Work exercises.

Control

Heelwork - the dog must walk with its shoulder reasonably close to the handler while the handler navigates the judges course at slow, normal and fast pace, this can be around people and obstacles.

Send away - involves sending the dog away across a minimum distance of 50 yards, in the CD stake. The handler then commands the dog to stop and wait until commanded to return. At higher levels the dog will be expected to run out 100+ yards. In TD they will also be redirected to another given location.

Retrieving a Dumb bell - the dog must retrieve a dumb bell which has been thrown by the handler.

Down Stay - the dog must stay in the down position while the handler is out of sight for a period of time.

Steadiness to Gunshot - the dog is tested on its reactions to gunshot. The dog will be penalised if it shows any signs of fear or aggression.

Speak - the dog is ordered to "speak" and cease "speaking" on command by the handler with a minimum of commands and/or signals.

Agility

To test its agility, the dog must clear three obstacles - a three-foot hurdle, a six-foot-high wooden scale and a nine-foot-long jump. Two attempts may be permitted for each obstacle.

Nose work

Nose work comprises search and track exercises. The dog follows a track laid by a 'tracklayer' (who is a stranger to the dog) walking a set pattern designed by the judge and identical for each dog. The track is approximately half a mile long and laid on grassland, arable fields or heathland with each competitor working on similar terrain to others in the stake.

As the dog follows the track it has to seek out and recover articles placed along the track by the tracklayer. The track is laid at different times, before the dog work begins, depending on the level of the competition. The other component of nose work is 'search' where the dog has to search for and retrieve articles placed in a marked area.

In the last couple of years an Introductory Stake has been added, where distance, time and heights have been reduced for the beginner dog.

Introductory Stake Exercises

We all begin in Group 1 which is described as 'Control', in this group there is heelwork 'on a lead' worth 5 marks with extra commands being allowed. Heelwork 'off the lead' is worth 10 marks, again with extra commands allowed. 'Recall' to the handler is the next discipline, worth 5 marks, then a send-away with a maximum of 50 yards which is worth a further 10 marks. Progressing then onto the 'sit stay' for 1 minute with the handler in sight, which is worth 10 marks followed by a 'down stay' with handler out of sight for 5 minutes and this is also worth 10 marks. This group can earn you up to 50 marks, the minimum qualifying marks are 35.

Group I - Control

Heel on Leash - 5 marks - Extra commands allowed

Heel Free - 10 marks - Extra commands allowed

Recall to Handler - 5 marks

Send-away - 10 marks - Maximum distance 50 yards

Sit Stay - 10 marks - 1 minute, handler in sight

Down Stay - 10 marks - 5 minutes, handler out of sight

Group marks = 50 Minimum qualifying mark = 35

Group II – Agility

Heights of dog at shoulder as CD Stake, obstacle dimensions reduced.

Three dog heights e.g. not exceeding 10in, not exceeding 15in, exceeding 15in.

Clear Jump - 5 marks - 1ft 3in/1ft 6in/2ft 6in

Long Jump - 5 marks - 3ft 3in/5ft 0in/6ft 0in

Scale - 10 marks (3 over/1 position and 1 stay/5 recall back over scale) 2ft 6in/3ft 3in/5ft 0in

Group marks = 20 Minimum qualifying mark = 14

Group III - Nosework

Retrieve a dumbbell - 10 marks - Extra commands allowed

Search - 15 square yards, 4 articles (max 3 retrieved), 4 mins.

20 marks (5 per article + 5 for style)

Group marks = 30 Minimum qualifying mark = 21

TOTAL MARKS = 100 MIN. QUALIFYING. MARK = 70

When your dog gains a qualifying mark of at least 70% in each group of exercises and at least 80% overall at a Championship Working Trial, it is entitled to use the title 'Excellent' after the qualification - for example UD Ex., WD Ex. or TD Ex.

To gain a Commendation (CoM) in an Open stake the team must qualify in each section and achieve 80% overall or qualify in each section with over 70% of the total marks at a Championship Trial.

Current entry requirements for championship trials

Utility Dog - The Dog must have qualified CoM in an Open UD Working Trial.

Working Dog - The dog must have qualified CD Ex, Utility Ex and CoM in an Open Trial.

Tracking Dog - The dog must have 2 x CoM's in an Open TD trial and have qualified WD Ex at 2 x Championship Trials