



## **Competitor trial Notes**

Please note: This is a description of a typical trial. Due to the real-world competition style of K9 Nose Work trials, your experience may differ based on the location and the variables affecting the trial that day. Please be aware that unlike classroom situations, trials can have unexpected challenges and distractors that we cannot change or control. Trials are set up as real life competitions.

If you're ready to compete in your first K9 Nose Work® trial, then it means that you and your dog have put in months of hard work, including training on all four elements of competition, and that you've passed the required Odour Recognition Test (ORT). Your first trial experience will be exciting, suspenseful, and exhausting, and you'll likely encounter unexpected challenges throughout the day, so a thorough understanding of what a trial is like will help you and your dog face the challenges and be proud of your trial performance.

Most K9 Nose Work trials are an all day event so you should plan to keep your dog safe and comfortable. Many handlers come equipped with shade cloths or "easy-up" canopies to keep their cars cool for their dogs' comfort. Especially in warm weather, these items, as well as fans, sunscreen for handlers, snacks, water and perhaps wet towels to cool their dogs with all come in handy. Most trials will dictate that you crate your dog in your car between runs, although at some trials you may find a crating area indoors, or in a shaded outdoor area. It is preferable to crate train your dog; however, if you decide to allow the dog to stay loose in your car, then perhaps a friend can accompany you to the trial to help keep your dog inside the car, and allow for adequate ventilation while you are at the check in, walk through and awards ceremony. You may also opt to tether your dog in the vehicle or use window barriers. We want to keep every dog safe at a trial. X-pens are not recommended and need to be covered if they are used, as there is a security risk if your dog should escape or another dog should enter your X-pen. Many of our trials are adjacent to busy roads, and a dog may be injured if it gets loose.

What to expect when you arrive on the trial grounds:

- Be sure you have read and are familiar with the current version of trial rules & regulations. <http://acsw.com.au/rulebook/>

Also, please be aware: No rewarding is allowed past the "on deck" or waiting station until you call an alert in the warm up boxes or the element.

The ACSW does not allow any photos or videoing of any part of the trial except for any professionals that have been pre-arranged by the host and approved by the ACSW.

- Park in designated areas. Your trial coordinator will let you know where to park.
- Toilet your dog in designated areas only, and dispose of waste. Please be

respectful of the facility.

- Please keep your dog on leash. Be mindful of keeping distance between your dog and other participants' dogs. No meet and greets please.
- Give dogs wearing yellow bandanas extra space whenever possible. K9 Nose Work trials are unique in that reactive dogs are able to participate. Reactive means that a dog may be uncomfortable with other dogs in close proximity. Location permitting, there will be a separate parking area for handlers with reactive dogs. A reactive dog toilet area will be assigned if space is available. These areas may be adjacent to the regular parking and toilet areas, and other dogs and handlers will be in proximity. Even though we take care to keep dogs at least 8 feet apart, we all have to navigate and share the trial facility.

Check-in at the registration table, without your dog.

- Find out the running order and any group assignments – this may mean your group runs the elements in a particular order. There will usually be a white board, or a list close to the registration area.
- Get a yellow bandana or ribbon if you have a reactive dog. You may tie the bandana around your dog's neck, or wear the bandana tied on your arm. It must be displayed so that other handlers know to keep their distance from your dog.
- Find out the time and location of handler briefing.

Please make yourself known if you are a first aider.

- Not all trial locations may be suitable for reactive dogs. The real-world nature of K9 Nose Work trials presents a number of variables that may put reactive dogs in stressful situations. Always make decisions in the best interest of your dog when deciding whether to enter a trial or to continue competing in a trial.

Trial Begins, first half is usually 2-3 hours long

- Know the running order.
- When the dog before you has gone to the search area, a steward will call for you to be ready or "on deck". Do not bring your dog "on deck" before you're called, we want to minimize socializing between dogs, only one dog should be waiting at a time. Make sure you give yourself some time to toilet your dog before you're called "on deck". If there are warm up boxes available, you can also use this time to give your dog a chance to search and be rewarded. Always make sure the area for the warm up boxes is clear of other dogs before you approach.

- You will likely complete two search elements before the lunch break at a NW1 trial. They may happen in succession, or you may return your dog to your crating area or car between elements, depending on logistics of the trial grounds.
- Be prepared to wait between elements. While you are waiting for the team ahead of you to clear the element area, you may be sequestered for a time. Make good use of this time to keep your dog in his best state of mind, be that excited or calm.
- When you have completed your element, you will be ushered by the steward on to the next element station, or if you are done, you will be shown how to exit out of the search area.

#### Lunch Break, 45 minutes to 1 hour

There may be a midday break that will allow the officials and volunteers to take a rest and prepare for the remainder of the trial. The judges in particular need a rest from the intense mental concentration required to watch and evaluate the searches of each dog and handler team. This time is also used to set up other locations, hides, or do clean up. Take advantage of this break to walk your dog in a designated area, and to attend to any of his other needs. Many trial participants use this time to meet new handlers, and make new friends. Some participants like to “tailgate”, adding to the fun and culture of K9 Nose Work. Note: The break may happen at different times for each search area. There is not necessarily a complete stoppage of the trial during this time. Also note that due to line of sight issues, it is frequently not possible for competitors to leave the site during this time.

#### Trial Resumes, 2nd half is usually 2-3 hours

- Know your place in the running order
- Complete your remaining elements.
- Scores and score sheets are not available until all competitors have completed the trial, and the volunteers in the scoring room have finished tabulating and verifying scores,

#### Judges Debriefing and Awards Ceremony

Be prepared to wait sometime at the end of the trial as the score room lead has to enter and check all results before preparing a trial summary report

At the end of the trial, there is an assembly where the judges will provide an overview of their observations, answer questions, and discuss the elements, trial hides and the challenges they posed on this particular day. Ribbons are awarded for titles, overall placement, individual element placement and “Partnership acknowledgements”. Even if your dog does not title, he can still earn placement awards.

Outstanding awards are also presented to:

The 'Highest Scoring Dog Award' is given to the highest scoring and fastest dog.

The 'Partnership Award' is not automatically awarded due to the score or comments. The nature of ACSW® trials include the participation of several judges, each with their own interpretation and opinion on the teamwork they view in the element they are judging. Judges will note a "P" on element score sheets when they wish to recognize the technique and/or teamwork for that team, so that handlers may receive feedback and have understanding about areas of their searches that were most notable to that judge. At the trial end, all of the score sheets will be reviewed. The handler/dog teams receiving a "P" on any searches completed in that trial will receive a 'partnership' ribbon and be considered for the 'Partnership Award' as decided by judges discretion. The 'P' is not considered part of a title. \*\*The score book will indicate a 'Partnership Award' designation with a 'PA' and the ribbons will be acknowledged with lower case p's

The Partnership Award is given by the judges in recognition of handler/dog team demonstrating exceptional technique and/or teamwork at each trial and title level. The judges will evaluate the teams for Professionalism, handler and dog safety, observational skills, leash handling technique, off leash control, speed and efficiency, accuracy, stamina, enthusiasm, clarity of alert and odour obedience." The "Partnership Award" cannot be awarded to the same team that is awarded High in Trial

The 'Bravo Award' is given to the most outstanding rescue dog that demonstrates extraordinary ability and spirit in nose work. A rescue dog may be defined as a dog that was not purchased from a breeder, private party or store. The dog may have been adopted from a shelter, rescued from the street, fostered with a rescue organization, etc. The five highest scoring rescue dogs at each trial will be considered by the judges for the Bravo Award when available. Please note judges will only consider faults that relate to the dog such as toileting during search or damaging or compromising search areas. Human faults such as dropping food or allowing your dog to go under a vehicle will not reflect on the dog. . A dog may receive this award multiple times. Rescue designation is taken from your ACSW® dog registration information.

The ACSW does not post trial results. The Hosts will be provided with the trial summary report which includes the following,

First , Second and Third place for each element

First, Second and Third place for Overall in trial.

Listing of NW Titles gained.

High in Trial Award

Bravo Award

Partnership Award.

Now you have a better understanding of what a trial is like - but you may still want to see one in person. Signing up as a trial volunteer will allow you to see how a typical trial unfolds. When you decide to enter your first trial, remember that the goal is always for your dog to have fun. No matter what the outcome of the competition, you and your dog will have gained valuable experience that will have a positive effect on your K9 Nose Work journey.

## **Change log**

Version 1.0	First release
Version 1.1	Added ACSW rule book and removed link to NACSW rulebook