



**SPORTING DETECTION
DOGS ASSOCIATION**

MASTER RULE BOOK

VERSION 5.0 JANUARY 1, 2024

**SPORTING DETECTION DOGS ASSOCIATION (SDDA)
RULE BOOK - VERSION 5.0 JANUARY 1, 2024**

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GENERAL REGULATIONS

All titling trials must be sanctioned by the SDDA and must be judged by an SDDA certified judge. DOT tests do not require approval from the SDDA and may be judged by any experienced person, however, hosts must still abide by all general regulations as stated below.

Eligibility:

- Dogs must be at least 6 months of age to attend a test or trial.
- Minors under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian in the search areas at all official events.
- All dogs must be in good health on the day of an event and should be current on all vaccinations required by law for that region.
- Any test or trial may be halted, or a dog excused at the discretion of the judge if at any time the judge deems the dog to be under extreme stress or physical discomfort.
- Dogs with a pre-existing condition that may exhibit as unsoundness but that does not cause undue stress or discomfort may compete with a veterinarian's note to be presented at check-in so the judge may be advised. In the case of recent injury or illness, the vet note must be dated within two weeks of the trial date.
- Handlers requiring special accommodation should advise the secretary prior to the commencement of the trial so the judge can be advised and accommodations planned.
- Bitches in season (BIS) may attend a test or trial but handlers must notify an official before the event begins so that another competitor can be notified of any change in schedule.
- BIS will test or compete at the end of all DOT tests and at the end of any single component at a trial and must wear pants.
- If BIS are excluded from a trial (which must be stated in the Premium), the host must refund a minimum of 50% of the entry fee should the bitch be withdrawn from the trial after coming into season with a veterinarian's note with contact information presented.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

Judges and hosts have the authority to expel any handler from a test or trial who displays unsportsmanlike conduct during the event. These may include but are not limited to:

- Striking, kicking or otherwise roughly handling a dog
- Harassing or abusing any event official or competitor
- Discussing or sharing videos with other competitors the location of a target odour or cleared areas
- If a dog or handler is expelled by a judge, the judge must immediately inform the host of the expulsion
- The Board of Directors with the assistance of the Ombuds Committee shall investigate and determine a course of action following any report of unsportsmanlike conduct

Aggression:

All persons must exercise care and control of any dog (not just competing animals) while attending a SDDA event

- A dog that bites (causes a wound) another dog or a person at an event will be expelled from that event with no refund. A notation of the incident will be made to the dog's SDDA records
- A dog that bites (causes a wound) another dog or a person for a second time at an event will be disqualified from that event and all future competition

Equipment in Search Areas:

- Non-tightening flat collar or non-tightening harness
- Any length of leash but excluding retractable or chain leads
- Prohibited in the search area: choke, pinch or prong collars, electronic collars or head halters, tags or other items hanging from the collar, leash or harness.
- Bitches in season must wear pants

Videography and Photography

- Competitors not entered in the component or who have already run or other persons to take photos or videos may be present outside the search areas with the permission of the judge
- Handlers are not allowed to take photos or videos with and handheld device while handling a dog
- Videos or photos may not be shared with others in the same component who have not yet run

DESIGNATED ODOUR TEST (PASS/NO PASS)

Designated Odour Tests (DOTs) may be taken at any time and are not mandatory. No dog registration is required. The purpose of the DOT is to test if the dog is able to determine the location of the target scents used in competition with its location unknown to the handler and the ability of the handler to correctly call an alert. A formal alert is not required. DOTs may be held for any official scent and the order is at the discretion of the tester or host.

The scents are as follows: Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Red/White Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*). Only one scent is used in each test.

The Rules

The DOT is a container search exercise. The target scent is placed into one of 12 to 14 opaque vented boxes (any material), set up in a pattern of one to four rows. Each box is to be set a minimum of 92 centimeters (3') apart. Boxes should not exceed 30 centimeters (12") in height. The target box should contain a single scented cotton swab, prepared the day of the DOT. The swab should be secured to the inside of the box or in a small container inside the box so that it is not visible to the handler. The target box should be moved to a new location for each dog being tested. The box must be moved out of the sight of the team to be tested so that each search is a blind one. Damaged or noticeably marked boxes must be replaced. Each search has a time limit of 3 minutes.

The test is conducted on leash with no deliberate distractions. Only one dog may be in the testing area at any time. Bitches in heat are run at the end of all tests. The number of dogs per handler per odour is set by the DOT host, based on available space and time. The DOT may be observed by anyone.

How to Run a Test

The tester will provide a handlers briefing to review the test and location parameters. A Starting Mark (SM) will be indicated. Once called, the handler may take up to 15 seconds to begin the search. Time starts when the dog's nose crosses the SM. A SM may be any visual indicator such as a pair of cones, a line of tape on the ground or a gate.

The handler and dog may pass up and down the row(s) in any pattern as many times as they choose. Handlers may direct the dog to the boxes and may touch them but should avoid it if possible. When, in the handler's opinion, the dog alerts on the target box, the handler should signal to the tester by saying "FIND" or "ALERT". Once the tester has determined that the dog has found the correct box and verbally informed the handler, the handler may then reward the dog. This is a pass. The reward may be offered anywhere, but without allowing it to drop to the floor. If the alert is not correct, the tester will direct the handler to the correct box to help the dog succeed. In this case, the dog will not pass for that target odour.

DOT packages with detailed instructions and official SDDA certificates can be purchased from the SDDA and can be administered by anyone who is a Registered Participant of the SDDA and has experience in sport detection/nose work. Please contact us to order.

GENERAL TRIAL GUIDELINES

- ❖ Handlers must check in with the trial secretary/registration desk to confirm their dog's SDDA registration number and running order before the handler's briefing.
- ❖ There will be a handler's briefing to review general rules and guidelines as well as hide numbers where applicable. Judging criteria may also be reviewed on request.
- ❖ There will be a walk-through for handlers (no dogs) of all the search areas before each component/level. The Starting Mark and boundaries will be indicated during the walk-through. Allowable off-leash search areas will be indicated (if any). Safety concerns may be addressed to an SDDA official at this time. Gross hazards (such as broken glass) will have been removed, however the environment may not be pristine.
- ❖ A running order will be posted in the handler staging area and/or registration desk.
- ❖ There can be no training or non-official use of odour on trial grounds. Any oil bottles, tins or kits must be kept inside personal vehicles.
- ❖ Besides the judge and timer, only non-competing officials, shadow judges or photo/videographers should be present during any search, except in the case of an assistant to a disabled person or the parent of a minor. Handlers may request an exception for a non-competitor or a previous competitor to be in the search area.
- ❖ Handlers may touch a search object (but are to avoid it) but must receive permission from the judge to pick up or move objects in the search area.
- ❖ If components include an optional off-leash search, the location must ensure the dog's safety. Dogs must be under good control if not on leash. Handlers may keep their dogs on leash if they prefer.
- ❖ Hosts must hold a Container search before an Interior or Exterior search for Started and Advanced Levels. Components in Excellent and Elite may be run in any order. It is not required to offer all Components at a trial at a Level, except for Elite which must offer all three Components.
- ❖ All teams must complete a component before scores sheets are presented.
- ❖ Official SDDA qualifying ribbons are provided to trial hosts along with score sheets.
- ❖ Event ribbons or other awards may be presented for individual placements and/or for individual component searches at the discretion of the trial organizer.
- ❖ Certificates, plaques, pins and/or rosettes will be awarded by the SDDA for Championship titles.
- ❖ There are two competition streams in Started, Advanced and Excellent Levels: Working (W) and Amateur (A). Handlers or dogs working or previously employed in a professional capacity in detection as well as scent detection instructors/coaches/trainers/judges must enter the Working stream and will be ranked and placed (if placements are offered) separately from Amateurs. There are no streams in Elite.

- ❖ Dogs that have achieved a title (passed all 3 components at any level) must also enter the Working stream at the next trial event (after their title has been processed) if they continue to compete at that level. Once they move onto the next level, they may again trial as Amateurs.
- ❖ There will be no change to search areas or hides for Working stream competitors, but a higher level of proficiency is expected. There are no streams required in Elite.
- ❖ Once a dog has passed a component at one level, they may move onto *the same component* at the next level (i.e. Passing a Started Container search is a pre-requisite to entering an Advanced Container search). Dogs may not enter components that they have not passed at the lower level. An Excellent title is required to enter Elite.
- ❖ If a host allows entry for second dogs, the second dog group will run at the end of each component so that the judge can change the hide location(s) for them.
- ❖ Bitches in heat will run at the end of the second dog group. The search area must be the same for both groups.
- ❖ A dog may not be entered in the *same* component more than once in the same trial. (I.e. a dog may not be run again in the second dog group even with a different handler)
- ❖ Volunteers/officials will run their dogs at the start of any component and before starting their duties as long as their duties can be temporarily reassigned.
- ❖ Dogs may enter any component For Exhibition Only (FEO) as long as there is available space after all regular entries have been accepted. Trial organizers have the option of limiting FEO entries in other ways (eg. only in certain components or levels) but must state any additional limitations clearly on entry forms. FEO entries will run after regular entries but before bitches in heat.

TITLING COMPETITIONS ELEMENTS OF TRIALS

A title in standard competition is acquired once a dog has successfully received a qualifying score in each component (Container, Interior and Exterior) at one level. Games titles are acquired by passing each game three times. Certificates are provided by the SDDA in recognition of achieving a title. Titles may only be achieved at SDDA-sanctioned events, which must be judged by SDDA-certified judges.

Scoring

All standard components are scored. Games are not scored and will be judged as Pass/Not Pass.

Started Level: The component scores for the Started title total 100 points. The Container Search is scored out of a total of 30 points, with 15 points (50% - the minimum qualifying score) attributed to the find. The Interior Search is scored out of 40 points with 20 points (50% - the minimum qualifying score) attributed to the find. The Exterior Search is scored out of 30 points with 15 points (50% - the minimum qualifying score) attributed to the find.

Advanced Level: The component scores for the Advanced title total 200 points. The Container Search is scored out of 60 points, the Interior Search is scored out of 80 points and the Exterior Search is scored out of 60 points. Dogs must achieve 50% of the total score of each Component for a passing/qualifying score PLUS find all available hides in each Component. The final score is tabulated by dividing the score out of 200 by two (2) to reach a percentage that will be reflected by the title classifications (see below).

Excellent Level: The component scores for the Excellent Level total 200 points. The Container Search is scored out of 60 points, the Interior Search is scored out of 80 points and the Exterior Search is scored out of 60 points. Dogs must achieve 50% of the total score of each component for a passing/qualifying score PLUS find all available hides in each component and identify the clear room in the Interior Search. The final score is tabulated by dividing the score out of 200 by two (2) to reach a percentage that will be reflected by the title classifications (see below).

Elite Level: The component scores for the Elite Level total 200 points. The Container Search is scored out of 60 points, the Interior Search is scored out of 80 points and the Exterior Search is scored out of 60 points. Dogs must achieve 50% of the total score of each component for a passing/qualifying score PLUS find all available hides in each search area and identify any clear areas. The final score is tabulated by dividing the score out of 200 by two (2) to reach a percentage that will be reflected by the title classifications (see below).

Each Elite component must be passed **in the same trial** in order to achieve a title.

Title scores noted on certificates are classified as Insufficient (under 50%), Satisfactory (50% to 70%), Bronze (71% – 85%), Silver (86% – 95%) or Gold (96% – 100%).

Timing

Each component search will be timed and all available hides must be found within the time limit for each component. If necessary for placement ribbons or trophies, ties in component/stream placements will be broken by time with the faster time getting the higher placing. The time starts as the dog's nose passes through the Starting Mark and will end when the handler calls "Alert" or "Find" on the final hide in each component at Started and Advanced.

At Excellent (Interior) and Elite (all components), the handler should indicate when they are finished searching each area by saying "Finish" or "Done". Time stops on the final Alert (Exc. Int)/Finish/Clear/Done for that area. With multiple room searches, the time may be paused between rooms at the discretion of the judge.

Titling Scores

Regular competition levels: Qualifying scores may be achieved in any single component in Started, Advanced and Excellent. Once a dog has achieved a qualifying score in each component at a level, they will earn a title at that level. If an untitled dog passes all three components of the same level at the *same* trial, they will achieve their title with a SPECIAL (SP) designation. For an Elite title, all three components *must* be passed at the same trial to title. A title is only acquired once although competitors may continue to compete in levels they have titled in.

Competitors may enter any components that they have previously passed in order to bank scores or to attempt to achieve a Special (if they have not already titled at that level). If multiple component scores are achieved before titling, the highest score will be applied to the title score unless the title is achieved as a Special title (only scores from that day are counted).

For all Championship titles, competitors may aggregate their highest scores from each passed component, but each passing score may only be used once towards a titling score. An initial Special title and all Elite titling scores will be considered as single scores.

Competition games: Three passing scores in a game earns a title in that game. Titles in at least three Games earns a Games Championship title.

Deductions

Both the handler's and the dog's performance are scored. Deductions are guidelines only and may be affected by the judge's impression of the entire performance and the dog and handler as a team.

Dog deductions include:

- Lack of focus/distracted
- Passing the hide due to lack of commitment or focus
- Disregarding handler direction
- Noticeably damaging or opening up the hide
- Lack of or poor formal alert in Advanced, Excellent and Elite

Handler deductions include:

- Handler not reading dog (eg. pulling dog off odour)
- Poor control of dog or leash
- Inconsistent search sequence
- Rough commands or handling
- Unduly contaminating the hide or the search area
- Picking up or moving a search item without permission from the judge

NQs

Non-qualifying scores may apply to any component search but will not prevent the team from continuing with other components. After an NQ without a find, the handler may ask the judge to indicate a correct hide location so that the handler may bring the dog to it and reward it.

NQs will be given for the following:

- Timed out – the time limit is exceeded without the dog making an available find as determined by the handler or the handler not calling “Clear” for a blank area or “Finish/Done” before leaving the search area (where required).
- False finds – the handler calls an alert where no hide is located.
- Excused – the dog is excused by the judge for undue stress or obvious pain.
- Elimination in ring – the dog eliminates in the search area.
- Leaving the search area – a dog or handler moves entirely out of the search area boundaries due to avoidance, fear or distraction.
- Handler excuses themselves from a search.
- Repeated harsh commands or rough handling.
- Dog exposes scent container or distraction before the Alert is called by the handler.
- Dog disturbs search area to the extent that hides are no longer identifiable by the judge.
- Dog is wearing prohibited equipment.

Eliminations (applicable at any time during the trial)

A handler will be excused from a trial without refund for:

- Striking, kicking or otherwise aggressively handling a dog or any handling that is considered abusive or inhumane in the opinion of the judge or host.
- Harassing or abusing any event official or competitor.
- Discussing with other competitors the location of a target odour or clear areas.
- Aggression by the dog towards the judge or other officials.
- Extreme lack of control of dog.
- The unofficial use of trial scents on the trial grounds by a handler.

The Judge and/or host may dismiss any dog and/or handler from the trial site for cause. Further, an officiating Judge may unilaterally dismiss a handler and/or dog from the trial for abuse or aggression. If any such action is taken, a report must be submitted to the Discipline Committee, using the Incident Report Form found on the SDDA website.

Alerts

When a handler deems the dog has found the location of a hide, they must call “Alert” or “Find”, preferably with a hand raised for clarity. After they have called an alert, a handler may not cue/re-cue the dog to search/indicate until the judge has confirmed the call. After the judge has confirmed the alert, the handler may reward his dog or can continue the search in the case of multiple hides. Formal (trained) alerts are expected and scored at the Advanced, Excellent and Elite levels and may take any form that does not noticeably damage the hide or open it up. Handlers may submit up to two formal alerts for Advanced, Excellent or Elite trials. They must be the same for each component. Examples include: sit, down, freeze/stare, look at handler, and should be a distinct behaviour performed with intensity for a full score.

Distractors

Allowable distractors at the Advanced and Excellent levels include: dog toys (Kongs, balls, tugs, stuffed toys etc.), kibble or dry treats in a container, leashes/collars, or unused, clean odour containers and/or swabs. Elite level distractors may also include human food items. Distractors must be safely contained and inaccessible to the dog.

Should a dog pick up or mouth an unintentionally distracting object, handlers may command their dog to disregard it or drop it but should avoid touching it if possible.

Rewards

Dogs may be rewarded in the search area. Rewards may include touch, praise, food and/or toys and must be presented without unduly disturbing or contaminating the search area.

Search Areas

Search areas must be cordoned off or marked so that the boundaries are clearly visible, vehicle and container searches excepted. Walls, fences and other existing barriers may be used as boundaries. An obvious Starting Mark must be provided for each search area.

Container search areas must be a minimum of 400 square feet at all Levels; Interior and Exterior areas must be at least 100 square feet. Maximum size for Started and Advanced is 1,000 square feet and 2,000 square feet for Excellent and Elite Levels.

Vehicles should be a reasonable distance apart (enough space to allow comfortable passage of dog and handler) and set in any configuration. Vehicles must be empty of other dogs or people.

Target Odours

Wintergreen (*gaultheria procumbens*) – Target odour for SD-S

Pine (*pinus sylvestris*) – Target odour added at SD-A

Red/White Thyme (*thymus vulgaris*) – Target odour added at SD-E

SDDA approved brands for trials include: *Aromaforce*, *Now* and *New Directions*, and must be unadulterated.

Hides

Scent swabs must be prepared a maximum of 72 hours prior to the trial. One drop or dab of essential oil on a cotton swab, pad or ball will be used for Started, Advanced and Excellent. At Elite level any absorbent material may be used. Scented swabs *et al.* must be in a scent container/straw and not accessible by the dog. Hides must be placed in the search areas by the judge a minimum of 15 minutes before the first dog enters the search area.

Hides will remain in the same location for all the dogs competing at the same level, except in the case of group for handlers running a second dog where permitted. The judge may also move the hide or replace a vehicle at their discretion if the area is being marked up or has been contaminated. If the hide is moved for handlers with second dogs or due to contamination, there must be sufficient time between the two searches to age the hide.

Buried and water hides are acceptable at Excellent and Elite Levels. Buried hides must be in loose material or vented to the surface and may not be set deeper than 15 centimeters (6 inches.)

If hides are placed closely adjacent to one another in an area or vehicle search, they must be at least 91.4 cm (3') apart in all directions and be different odours; for example, Pine and Thyme.

TITLING LEVELS

STARTED, ADVANCED, EXCELLENT, ELITE

Sporting Detection Started – SD-S

Target Odour - Wintergreen

There are three components to the SD-S title:

1. Container Search – 1 hide, time limit 3 minutes, must be indoors
2. Interior Building Search – 1 hide, time limit 5 minutes
3. Exterior Search – 1 hide, time limit 5 minutes

Each component must be passed at least once in order to achieve a title. The handler must call the alert to stop the time but a formal, trained response by the dog is not required.

No blank areas and no distractors are allowed.

Accessibility of hides: Up to 92 centimeters (3 feet) in height. Hides should not be readily visible but should not be fully enclosed (eg. In a fully closed drawer or suitcase).

Dog and handler will, when called by a steward or judge, wait outside the Starting Mark (SM).

Handlers have 10 seconds to enter the search area once they have confirmed they are ready to start. Time starts once the dog's nose passes through the SM and end when the alert is called).

S-Container Search

The target scent is placed into one of 14 to 16 vented, opaque boxes (any material), set up in any pattern (lines, circles, squares). Each box is to be set a minimum of 92 centimeters (3') apart from neighboring boxes. Boxes should not exceed 30 centimeters (12") in height. The hide box will contain a single scented cotton swab, pad or ball in a small container inside the box.

S-Interior Search

A single hide is placed out of easy view in a marked area in an enclosed room or building containing approximately 15 - 20 potential hide locations. Objects may include furniture (tables, chairs, etc.), luggage, clothing or miscellaneous containers.

S-Exterior Search

A single hide is placed out of easy view in an outdoor area containing approximately 15 - 20 potential locations for hides. Locations may include furniture (picnic tables, patio chairs etc.), vegetation, fences, retaining walls or planters. Alternatively, the outdoor search may consist of three vehicles. Scent containers may not be placed inside the vehicle or more than 15 cm (6 inches) under the vehicle.

Sporting Detection Advanced – SD-A

Target Odours – Wintergreen and Pine

There are three components to the SD-A title:

1. Container Search – 2 hides, time limit 3 minutes (may be indoors or outdoors)
2. Interior Building Search – 2 hides, one or two rooms, time limit 5 minutes
3. Exterior Search – 2 hides, time limit 5 minutes

Each component must be passed at least once in order to achieve a title. A Formal Alert is scored and the judge must be informed, either verbally or on the score sheet, what it will be (up to two allowed). The handler must call all finds.

Accessibility of hides: Up to 92 centimeters (3 feet) in height. Hides may be fully enclosed (eg. In a closed drawer or suitcase).

One distractor is to be added to the Container Search (inside box).

Dog and handler will, when called by a steward or judge, wait outside the Starting Mark (SM).

Handlers have 10 seconds to enter the search area once they have affirmed they are ready to start. Time will start once the dog's nose passes through the SM and stops on the final alert.

A-Container Search

Advanced level container searches will contain two hides, at least one of which must be Pine. Each target scent is placed into one of 16 to 20 vented, opaque containers (any material), set up in any pattern (lines, circles, squares). Each box is to be set a minimum of 92 centimeters (3') apart from neighboring boxes. Boxes should not exceed 30 centimeters (12") in height. Each hide box will contain a single scented cotton swab, pad or ball in a small container inside the box.

A-Interior Search

Two hides are placed out of easy view in one or two marked areas in an enclosed room or buildings containing approximately 15 - 20 potential hide locations. If two rooms are used, there must be a hide in each room. Objects may include furniture (tables, chairs, etc.), luggage, bags or miscellaneous containers. The judge will advise handlers at the briefing or walk-through of the number of rooms.

A-Exterior Search

Two hides are placed out of view in an outdoor area containing approximately 15 - 20 potential locations for hides. Locations may include furniture (picnic tables, patio chairs etc.), vegetation, fences, retaining walls or planters. Alternatively, the outdoor search may consist of three vehicles. Scent containers may not be placed inside the vehicle or more than 15 cm (6 inches) under the vehicle.

Sporting Detection Excellent – SD-E

Target Odours – Wintergreen, Pine and Thyme

There are three components to the SD-E title:

1. Container Search – 3 hides, time limit 4 minutes (may be indoors or outdoors)
2. Interior Building Search – 3 hides, 3 rooms, one of which is a clear area, time limit 15 minutes
3. Exterior Search – 3 hides, time limit 5 minutes
4. Each component must be passed at least once in order to achieve a title. A Formal Alert is scored and the judge must be informed, either verbally or on the score sheet, what it will be (up to two allowed). The handler must call all finds and the clear.

Accessibility of hides: Up to 123 centimeters (4 feet) in height. Hides may be fully enclosed (eg. In a closed drawer or suitcase), but not in an airtight container.

One or two contained distractors may be added to the Container Search. One contained distractor may be added to the Interior Search.

Dog and handler will, when called by a steward or judge, wait outside the Starting Mark (SM). Handlers have 10 seconds to enter the search area once they have affirmed they are ready to start. Time will start once the dog's nose passes through the SM. The timer will stop the clock when the handler calls the final alert for the component or "Clear", "Finish" or "Done".

E-Container Search

Excellent level container searches will include three hides, one of which must be Thyme. Each target scent is placed into one of 16 to 20 vented, opaque containers with or without visible holes and of any safe material that will tolerate being stepped on or pushed without breaking. Containers may be set up in any pattern (lines, circles, squares, etc.). Each container is to be set a minimum of 30 centimeters (1 foot) apart from neighboring containers. Each hide container will contain a single scented cotton swab, pad or ball in a small container.

E-Interior Search

There will be three interior search areas ("rooms"). One will have one hide, one will have two hides and one will be clear. Before the team can move from one room to another, they must call "Finish" or "Done" after calling each available hide. Competitors are not permitted to return to previously searched rooms. The judge has the discretion to allow competitors to choose the order of the searches or may determine an order. Each room must contain at least 15 potential hide locations. Objects may include furniture (tables, chairs, etc.), luggage, clothing or miscellaneous containers.

E-Exterior Search

Three hides are placed out of easy view in an outdoor area containing at least 15 potential locations for hides. Locations may include furniture (picnic tables, patio chairs etc.), vegetation, fences, retaining walls or planters. The area search may contain one vehicle. Alternatively, the Exterior search may consist of three to four vehicles. Scent containers may not be placed inside the vehicle or more than 15 cm (6 inches) under the vehicle.

Sporting Detection Elite – SD-EL

Target Odours – Wintergreen, Pine or Thyme

There are three components to the SD-EL title:

1. Container Search – 2 to 4 hides, time limit 4 minutes (may be indoors or outdoors)
2. Interior Building Search – 2 or 3 rooms, zero to 5 hides, time limit 10 minutes
3. Exterior/Vehicle Search – zero to 3 hides, time limit 5 minutes

Each component must be passed at the same trial in order to achieve a title. Components will be done in the order determined by the host and/or judge. A Formal Alert is scored and the judge must be informed, either verbally or on the score sheet, what it will be (up to two allowed). The handler must call all finds and the clear areas.

Accessibility of hides: Up to 122 centimeters (4 feet) in height from the floor or above a stable surface (table, bed etc.). Hides may be fully enclosed (eg. in a closed drawer). One to three contained distractors may be added to any search element.

Dog and handler will, when called by a steward or judge, wait outside the Starting Mark (SM). Handlers have 10 seconds to enter the search area after they have affirmed they are ready to start. The time will start once the dog's nose passes through the SM. The timer will stop the clock when the handler calls "Clear", "Finish" or "Done".

EL-Container Search

Elite level container searches will include two to four hides of any target scent. Each target scent is placed into one of 16 to 20 opaque containers (any material), with or without holes, set up in any pattern (lines, circles, squares). They may also be raised or placed below furniture. Each box is to be set a minimum of 30 centimeters (1 foot) apart. The hide containers will contain a single scented piece of absorbent material in a small container that is not visible to the handler.

EL-Interior Search

There will be two or three interior search areas. The Interior search areas (combined) may have up to 5 hides or as few as none. The team must finish searching one room and call "Finish/Done" or "Clear" for a clear room before moving onto the next room. Each room must contain at least 15 potential hide locations. Objects may include furniture (tables, chairs, etc.), luggage, bags or miscellaneous containers.

EL-Exterior Search

Zero to three hides are placed out of easy view in an outdoor area containing at least 15 potential locations for hides. Locations may include any combination of furniture (picnic tables, benches, etc.), vegetation, fences, retaining walls or planters as well as up to three vehicles.

COMPETITION GAMES (PASS/NO PASS)

Target Odours – Wintergreen, Pine or Thyme

Aerial – SD-GA

Class description: There will be 14 to 16 containers of any form in any pattern in the search area suspended from a sturdy wall or fence, or hanging freely from the ceiling or from a rope or other device between two solid objects. This game may be held indoors or outdoors. There are two categories with different height limits (see below). Any and all passing scores count towards a title. Handlers should indicate on the entry form or at check-in which category they wish to enter. Hosts should group entries in the two categories to run together so that the hide is not moved between each dog.

High – For small (under 15”), elderly or disabled dogs. The bottom of the containers must be no higher than 3 ft from the ground for hides hung from a fence or wall and no higher than 2 ft if hanging freely. Minimum height is 1 ft.

Highfly – For larger (over 15”) dogs or for additional challenge. The bottom of the containers must be no higher than 4 ft from the ground for hides hung from a fence or wall and no higher than 3 ft if hanging freely. Minimum height is 1 ft. Competitors should enter the appropriate category for their dog. Hosts must provide both categories and encourage fair play based on each dog’s characteristics.

1. There will be one hide of any official odour.
2. There will be 1 distractor (Advanced level).
3. Containers should be suspended from 1 to 3 ft apart.
4. Recommended time limit is 2 minutes but the judge can reduce or increase this based on container type or environmental factors. Time stops when the handler calls Alert.
5. Second dogs will be allowed for this game.

Distance – SD-GD

Class description: A fully enclosed interior or exterior search area minimum 400 sq ft up to 1,000 sq ft in size. The handler must remain in a designated spot, the handler station (HS) and direct the dog to search without leaving that station. The HS may be marked off with tape, cones, ring gates, paint or other visible perimeter. The HS can be any shape with a recommended area of 10 to 16 sq ft. The handler station may be located anywhere in the search area or at the Starting Mark as long as the entire search area is visible to the handler.

1. The handler must release the dog at the Starting Mark then move directly to the HS if not located at the SM and may not step out of the HS until the dog’s alert is confirmed by the judge. Then the handler may leave the HS reward and/or collect the dog.
2. The handler may choose to run the dog on a long line and may drop the leash if necessary.
3. There will be one hide of any official odour and it may be situated up to 3 ft in height. There will be no distractors.
4. Recommended time limit is 3 minutes but the judge can reduce or increase this based on the size or complexity of the search area. Time stops when the handler calls Alert.
5. Second dogs will be allowed for this game.

Speed – SD-GS

Class description: There will be 16 to 20 boxes in any pattern in the search area. There will be 2 to 4 hides placed somewhere in the pattern as well as 2 to 4 distractors (Advanced level distractors only). The number of both will be unknown to the handler and dogs must locate all available hides to pass.

1. Boxes must be at least 3 ft apart and adjacent odours must be different.
2. The game should be held indoors where possible.
3. Time limit is 60 seconds. Time stops when the handler calls “Finish/Done”.
4. Second dogs will not be allowed for this game.

Team – SD-GT

Class description: An interior or exterior search area minimum 400 sq ft to 2,000 sq ft in size to be searched by two dog teams (i.e. two people, two dogs). Handlers may choose a partner or may be assigned one by the host. If there is an uneven number of entries, an FEO dog may be used to complete a team. Handlers may use any safe approach to search the area as long as both teams search for a portion of the allotted time. Handlers may communicate to one another throughout the search or plan their exchanges ahead.

1. There will be 2 to 5 hides in the search area of any official SDDA odour located up to 4 ft in height. Teams must locate all available hides to pass.
2. There will be 2 to 4 Advanced level distractors.
3. Recommended time limit is 5 minutes but the judge can reduce or increase this based on the size or complexity of the search area. Time stops when either handler calls “Finish/Done”.
4. Second dogs will not be allowed for this game.

CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES

Sporting Detection Champion – SD-CH

Five (5) titling scores from the Advanced and Excellent Levels. At least two (2) scores must be from Excellent level.

Sporting Detection Master Champion – SD-MACH

Ten (10) titling scores from the Advanced and Excellent Levels. At least three (3) scores must be from Excellent and the team must have at least three (3) Gold scores at either level.

Sporting Detection Elite Champion – SD-ELCH

Five (5) titling scores at the Elite Level achieved under at least two (2) different judges. At least two (2) scores must be Gold scores.

Sporting Detection Grand Master Champion – SD-GMCH

A MACH title plus an SD-ELCH. Scores must be achieved under at least three (3) different judges.

Games Champion – SD-GCH

Titles (3 passing scores) in any three (3) games. Eg. Titles in Distance, Aerial and Team.

SD-MACH*, SD-ELCH*, SD-GCH* and SD-GMACH*

Championship titles above SDCH may be earned multiple times. The requirements are below.

- SD-MACH2: a minimum of seven (7) Excellent level titling scores and a maximum of three (3) Advanced titling scores, with three (3) gold scores at Excellent.
- SD-MACH3: Ten (10) Excellent level titling scores with three (3) Gold scores
- SD-GCH2: Four (4) passes in any three (3) of the Games
- SD-GCH3: Five (5) passes in any three of the Games
- SD-ELCH2: Five (5) titling scores at the Elite level with three (3) gold scores
- SD-ELCH3: Five (5) titling scores at the Elite level with four (4) gold scores

HOSTING A TRIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VENUES, JUDGES, HOSTS AND COMPETITORS

Trial Requirements - Hosts

Hosts must provide:

1. A scent kit consisting of all necessary oils, clean containers and clean swabs/cotton balls.
2. All judging supplies such as pens, score sheets, calculators, stopwatches and clipboards. Spares of each are recommended.
3. Suitable containers, objects and areas as described in the trial descriptions. Clean items **MUST** be stored completely separately from any items that previously held scent.
4. Spare hide objects (boxes, suitcases, scent containers, etc.) must be provided by the trial host in case a judge wishes to replace a damaged or contaminated hide.
5. Distractions such as food, supplies and toys for Advanced, Excellent Levels. Elite Level may also include human food. A variety should be offered to the judge who will determine which items are appropriate for each level.
6. The correct number of vehicles (if the exterior search is to be on vehicles) for each level. Vehicles may include: cars, vans, trucks, tractors, motorcycles, skidoos, recreational vehicles and boat or utility trailers (horse and other livestock trailers excluded).
7. Suitable, safe search areas for each component offered. Search areas must be clear of dangerous items or contamination.
8. Search areas that have borders that are clearly marked as well as a Starting Mark.
9. Enough stewards/wranglers, gate keepers and timers to assist the judge in the smooth running of the trial.
10. A staging area where competitors may wait to be called to search without visual access to the search areas.
11. Score sheets prepared with available information for each competitor for the judge and (if applicable) the shadow judge. The shadow judge should use photocopies or printouts of the score sheets.
12. One copy (white) must be returned with the Trial Results Sheet to the SDDA along with any unused score sheets and qualifying ribbons. Yellow copies are given to the competitor. A host may make additional copies for their own records.
13. After the component is complete, competitors may pick up their copy of the score sheets (yellows) from the secretary or the host may choose to make a presentation of the results.
14. A running order must be posted in an area visible to competitors (NB. a trial official or shadow judge trialing a dog must go first in the order).
15. Hosts may only use the same judge in two consecutive trial events, after which they must use a different judge at least once. A trial event is defined as a single day trial or two or more consecutive trial days.

Trial Requirements – Competitors

1. Upon arrival the exhibitor should check in with their dog's registration card and to determine their place in the running order. Note that the running order may change for each component.
2. The exhibitor should know the scheduled trial start time and be present and ready to go when they is called by the steward from the staging area.
3. The dog should be wearing a properly fitted allowable collar (non-tightening) and/or non-restricting harness.
4. Tags and other items hanging from the harness or collar are prohibited in the search area.
5. The leash may be any length that allows the dog to work freely but not interfere with officials. No extendable or chain leashes allowed.
6. All dogs will approach and leave the search area on leash, even if the area has been designated as safe for unleashed searches. In the case of a secured room, the leash may be removed before crossing the starting mark once the area has been secured. Please check with the gate steward if you are unsure.
7. Dog clothing and accessories may be worn for the dog's comfort and safety with the judge's approval, as long as they do not interfere with the search. Accessories that emit odour are not permissible.
8. Handlers may bring rewards in the form of toys, treat containers or tugs into the search area. The presentation of the rewards must not, in the judge's opinion, contaminate the search area. It is recommended that toys and tugs be clean so as not to introduce dirt or hair onto the hide.
9. Handlers should avoid touching containers or furniture with hands or reward items so as to limit contamination.
10. Dogs may walk on or touch search elements but should be prevented from damaging them or contaminating the environment.
11. Handlers may communicate freely with their dog throughout the search as long as it is not deemed by the judge to be harsh (NQ) or abusive (elimination).
12. Any questions remaining after the judge's briefing should be addressed to the stewards or trial secretary before crossing the Starting Mark.
13. Handlers are expected to keep their dogs under control at all times. The judge or the event host may expel any person who fails to control a dog (even one not entered in the trial) and allows it to interfere with any person or dog or with the ability of others to stage or trial their dogs.
14. Dogs should be on leash at all times when not contained in a crate, vehicle or pen and while not competing in a designated off-leash search area.

Trial Requirements – Search Areas

Hosts must take care to keep the trial search areas clean by not storing prepared swabs on site or otherwise contaminating the search areas. There should be no sport detection training for a minimum of one week prior to a trial held in the same search area(s).

Containers Component: the space must be large enough for movement of dog and handler

Interior Component: searches are typically done in room-sized areas such as kitchens, offices, hotel room or storage room. The building can be of any type. Indoor areas divided by gating or other barrier within a larger space are permissible. Note that for Excellent Level Interior Search areas, which require a clear room, or Elite Level which may have a clear room, solid walls are preferred. Judges must pre-approve open-sided search areas.

Exterior Component: this component may consist of one of the following two variations for Started, Advanced and Excellent levels – (A) Vehicle Searches or; (B) Exterior Area Searches. Exterior searches will be conducted under any and all safe weather conditions (excluding lightning storms, for example). Search times may be extended at the discretion of the judge if weather or other factors will affect the difficulty of the search.

Vehicles should be of a number suitable to each level and only include the exterior. Vehicles may include: cars, vans, trucks, tractors, skidoos, recreational vehicles and boat or utility trailers (horse and other livestock trailers excluded). Vehicles should be clean and may not contain animals or people. The handler will never open a vehicle door or direct the dog into a window. Hides may only be placed under vehicles up to six (6) inches depth.

Exterior area searches can consist of any area that is outside. They can include but are not limited to exterior walls of buildings, fencing, picnic tables, planters, patios, etc.

Elite Level Exterior searches may consist of any combination of area and up to three (3) vehicles.

Trial Requirements – Judges' Responsibilities

1. Approval of each search area to be used in the trial.
2. Preparation of all scent containers as well as setting and removal of hides. Note: Should the host not have the correct oils on hand or pre-trial hide prep time is limited, judges may provide their own prepared hides. Discuss this with the hosts before the trial.
3. Presiding over the judge's briefing and answering any rule or procedural questions.
4. Filling in the scores and time on the score sheets. Totals can be done by the Secretary.
5. Score sheets must be signed and returned to the secretary.
6. Making or approving any minor variations on trial day in search area layout or design or component order to assist with the efficient and fair running of the trial. This may include changing the order of components (as long as Containers are held first in Started and Advanced) or running a team in consecutive components (eg. Interior following Containers immediately.)

TRIAL DEFINITIONS

Alert (Formal alert) – a distinct behaviour that is easily observable by the judge and is performed at a hide location. The behaviour should be performed as close to the hide as is possible for the dog and the accessibility of the hide and without damaging the hide. No points are lost if the dog's trained alert moves it away from the hide (eg. downing at a high hide) as long as it is clear the dog has identified the source of the odour prior to the change of position. Typical formal alerts include: sit, down, nose point/freeze. Other distinct behaviours are acceptable, particularly in an elderly or disabled dog.

Boundaries – Interior and Exterior areas searches must have some form of marking to outline the available space for searching. Typical markers include tape, caution tape, rope or traffic cones. Natural boundaries such as curbs, fences or walls are acceptable. Boundaries are not required for vehicles or container searches where the objects themselves indicate the searchable area.

Boxes – are used for Container searches at the Started and Advanced Levels. These may be of any material (eg. cardboard, plastic, wood) but should be reasonably durable. A dog should not be able to easily open the box by pressing with it's nose, placing a paw on it or stepping on it.

Clothing (dog) – it is permissible for the dog to wear anything covering portions of the dog for warmth, safety or comfort, including boots, coats or snoods. Clothing that may not be allowed includes anything that in the opinion of the judge interferes with the dog's mobility, comfort and ability to search effectively. Belly bands or panties are only allowed for dogs with a medical condition and are accompanied by a veterinary note, except in the case of bitches in heat who are required to wear panties.

Containers –Containers in Started and Advanced must be opaque and clearly vented (holes should not exceed 7.6 cm (3 in) in diameter (see Boxes). Containers do not have to precisely match but should be large enough to hold a scent container with a maximum height of 30 cm (12 in). The hide container must not be unique.

In Excellent and Elite, the containers may be of any safe material, shape or design and need not be vented (although they should not have an airtight seal). Examples might include luggage, coffee cans, cookie tins, clothing etc. Objects must be safe for dogs to sniff and walk on. At Started and Advanced, containers must be on the ground. At Started Level they must also be indoors. At Excellent and Elite, containers may be off the ground, but should still be readily visible and accessible in an open area. The goal is to test the dog against distractors and converging odour.

Contamination – Contamination occurs when foreign material is dropped in the search area that may disrupt the searching of following teams. This may include food or human odour from a handler touching items in the search area unnecessarily and excessively.

Elimination – Grounds for elimination from a trial are listed on page 8 of the Rule Book. If a team is eliminated they will be asked to leave the trial grounds immediately and may not continue to compete. Both the judge and the host are able to dismiss from a trial a handler or dog due to a witnessed incident.

Exterior Search – is to be conducted in a location that is open to the elements. If inside or adjacent to a structure, it should have no roof and at least one open wall is recommended. For example, it can be in a three-sided unroofed courtyard or in a pavilion with a roof but no walls.

Interior Search – is to be conducted in an area with a roof and at least three solid and/or substantial sides, preferably a minimum of 3 feet high for Started and Advanced and 4 feet high for Excellent and Elite, particularly between adjacent search areas. The fourth side may be any type of boundary that clearly indicates the limits of the search area. The trial judge will have the final determination of suitability.

Trial – An SDDA trial is defined as a single offering of any Level within a 12-hour period and will be assigned a unique trial number. A trial event is two or more trials on the same or consecutive trial days.

Trial Official – At an SDDA trial, officials include the judge and the host.

Vehicles – vehicles for searching are defined as a conveyance for people or goods. They should be large enough to provide sufficient areas to place hides and be solid enough to block airflow for a portion of the vehicle. For example: cars and trucks, trailers (box, tent, etc.), ATVs and lawn tractors are considered vehicles, but bicycles, wheelbarrows or push lawnmowers are not. Hides may only be on the outside of the vehicle and follow height and access guidelines for the level.

Excellent Level Exterior Area searches may include one vehicle. Elite Level searches may be any combination of area and vehicles.

APPLYING TO HOST A TRIAL

Hosts should fill out the relevant trial application form (found on our website) in full, listing the judge(s) and venue(s) that have been booked and all contact information. Every effort should be made to confer with the judge(s) to ensure that the trial venue is appropriate for the levels and components offered. This should be submitted to the SDDA for approval a minimum of 60 days prior to the trial date.

Once approved, the date and location will be posted on the SDDA website and hosts must prepare a Premium List with entry form which can be distributed publicly no sooner than three (3) days after the publication of their trial Premium by the SDDA. This is so that SDDA Registered Participants can be given priority notice of the trial date(s), location, levels, components and judge(s) via email. Hosts may accept entries in any reasonable and fair manner they choose but may not prioritize by number of components entered.

Should any of the elements of the premium list change, please advise all entrants and the Secretary of SDDA immediately. In the event of such a change, hosts should be prepared to refund any entries in full. More information on preparing for a trial and what fees are involved can be found on the website under: Hosting a Trial.

SPORTING DETECTION DOGS ASSOCIATION MISSION

To encourage all dogs, purebred and mixed, pets, companion, working or show dogs to participate in the sport of scent detection.

To encourage all handlers, experienced or inexperienced, and of any background to enjoy competing with their dog.

To provide a venue for dogs to earn titles in Sporting Scent Detection in Canada.

To maintain a registry of dogs competing.

To qualify and certify judges so that more trials can be held.

To maintain a registry of trial results and titles achieved.

To establish a database of classes, clinics and trials.

To encourage the humane training of dogs and good sportsmanship.

To develop this sport in Canada and elsewhere and establish new levels of competition.

To encourage appreciation for the dog's incredible scenting abilities.

OFFICIALS CODE OF CONDUCT AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The purpose of this document is to describe the standards for ethical conduct expected of any official or judge representing the Sporting Detection Dogs Association (SDDA). Officials include the board of directors and SDDA volunteers as well as hosts of an SDDA-approved trial.

Throughout this Code, use of the word "must" indicates that a clause is compulsory for SDDA officials. Use of the word "should" indicates that the clause is not compulsory but strongly encouraged as a best practice.

1. An SDDA official must at all times represent the spirit of the SDDA and strive to maintain the association's Mission Statement.
2. Judges must stay current with SDDA rules and regulations. Other officials should also remain current and be prepared to answer competitor questions.
3. SDDA officials must treat all dogs and competitors with respect and consideration for their well-being.
4. Officials should encourage and support positive methods of training.
5. Officials should practice, encourage and promote good sportsmanship in and out of the search areas.
6. Officials should refrain from publicly criticizing other judges, hosts or board members.
7. Judges and officials should assist hosts in the running of a fair and efficient trial and be willing to provide advice and adapt to unavoidable trial conditions.

Any judge or other SDDA official in violation of ethical conduct will have such conduct reviewed by the Board of Directors. Minor infractions will result in a warning letter. More serious or repeated infractions may result in the removal of judging or hosting privileges and may also result in being banned from participating in SDDA trials.

Consideration of repealing a suspension will be made may be requested from the Board.