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International Trial Rules

of Open Competition

for the

Search and Rescue Dogs Teams

SUPPORTED BY THE FCI



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▪ Preamble

The Open competition for Search and Rescue Dogs Teams are specifically designed to promote cohesion between team members. Knowing the performance ability of the team members, the corresponding ideal deployment and the smooth cooperation based on trust should be an important element of the competition. Therefore, the attempt was to keep the rules as flexible as possible, to allow as wide a margin as possible for initiative and independent decisions in solving individual tasks. It is an event where the dog has to perform individual tasks that are required of a rescue dog. Participation in search and rescue dog team events allows for a comparison of the highest level of training, taking certain stressors into account. There, with dogs handling dogs with suitable dogs, it can be recommended as new blood for home organizations.

Determining preparation for Open competition presents a wide range of logistical requirements; and team members are recommended to have physical and mental condition, the ability to work under pressure and knowledge of disaster management, first aid, telecommunications, orientation etc. These International Trial Rules of Open competition for Search and Rescue Dogs Teams Tests are approved by the FCI Rescue Dogs Commission and by the Board of Directors of the FCI. These Testing Standards were deliberated and drawn up in the English language. In any cases of doubt regarding the translations into other languages, the English language version shall be deemed the authoritative version.

These Regulations will be valid for a period of 5 years upon which they will be reviewed, changed, adapted and/or updated, if necessary, based on practical experiences.

These Testing Standards apply to all member organisations/federations of the FCI.

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General Information

The Open competition can be held at the final of the year. However, if the safety of the handler or the dog is in question, test certainly must be postponed to a later date. The final decision rests with the judges.

The verification of the dog's identity through checking the microchip has to be possible. Those dogs which are not identifiable will not be allowed to take part.

The structure of Open Competition is at the discretion of the organiser. A test must contain at least two scent work exercise, for:

Rubble Search - T

Area Search - FL

Tracking Search - F

In the Area and Rubble searches, the number of victims in each area is not known, but we know that the total is 6 victims, in two scent work exercise.

In Beyond this, the number, choice and order of the scent work exercises are completely discretionary. The composition and order of the scent work exercises should not be structured schematically but be as entertaining as possible for the participants, according to the means available to the organiser and what can reasonably be expected of the participants.

Maximum 14 rescue dog teams can be handled in one day depending on the length of the breaks in between the exercises.

A SAR Team consists of a GL (without dog) and 3 DHs with 3 Dogs. The team can be joined, as a reserve, by a dog handler with a dog. The reserve can replace a member of the team, until the end of the event, at the decision of the Team Leader.

A dog handler is only allowed to enter one team on any given day and within one competition only one dog may perform in a rescue dog sport team. A dog is only allowed to be led by one dog handler during a competition.

Voice commands and hand signals are left to the discretion of the dog handler in terms of how they are given. Voice commands generally consist of a word, hand signals are body signals given without touching the dog in any way.

Teams with bitches in heat may participate without restrictions. Sick and possibly contagious dogs are excluded from tests and must not be taken to the test site.

If a dog shows poor obedience, the judge will give the handler three chances to recall the dog. If the exercise is accomplished after the second command, the exercise of this dog is to be graded as unsatisfactory. If the dog shows no obedience after the third voice command, this is to be barred from taking further part in the test. The remaining team continues in the competition. The judge decides the timing.

The judge is entitled to discontinue the activity if a dog is quite clearly ill-prepared, displays insufficient willingness to work, is obviously not under the control of its handler, the dog appears aggressive or if physical limitations can be clearly identified.

The judge is entitled to give a warning to the dog handler or the GL if he behaves unsportsmanlike or uses prohibited aids. After the first warning 5 points will be deducted, after the second warning the discipline will be discontinued and graded as unsatisfactory.

Gross unsportsmanlike conduct by the handler, or aggressive behaviour from the dog, entitles the judge to disqualify the dog immediately.

In the same way, unsportsmanlike conduct by the MF entitles the PR to interrupt or disqualify the MF.

Any injury to an assistant due to aggressive behaviour from the dog will lead to disqualification of the team from the whole competition.

- **Termination of the Competition**

A dog interrupted in the first searching may still enter any next searching without restriction. If the dog is interrupted during the scent work, 50 points will be deducted from its score

- **Disqualification of a Dog Handler**

Should a HFT be disqualified from one section then it is excluded from the whole competition. If the HFT is disqualified during the scent work, 50 points will be deducted from its score. Each set of marks already scored by the team in the scent work will be reduced by 50 points. The team only enters the tasks following the scent work with the remaining HFT and is duly penalised for the non-deployment of a HFT.

- **Disqualification of the Group Leader**

Should the GL be disqualified, the team is excluded from the whole competition and any points already scored will be withdrawn.

The disqualification of the team excludes it from the whole competition. All points already scored are cancelled.

- **Types of Alert**

The type of alert is at the team's discretion.

A special collar, on which a "bringsel" is fixed, is fitted on a dog if it is doing "bringsel" work. The collar has to have a releasing mechanism which protects the dog from injuries.

- **Testing Authorisation**

The permit to hold an event is issued by the responsible umbrella organisation of the event organizer (FCI-NCO). The Open competition can only be held when there are at least 4 teams, at least one of the specialties F, FL, T.

- **Test Organisation**

The Test Manager is responsible for the organisational part of the testing event. He handles and oversees all the necessary work for the preparation and execution of a competition, especially the set-up of the track circuit for the disciplines obedience and dexterity, in accordance with the judge. The Test Manager is available to the judge for the entire duration of the test. He has to be appointed to the judge at least 14 days before the event starts.

▪ **Liability**

The dog handler is liable for himself and his dog in the event of any accidents during the Team Competition.

The owner of the dog must pay for any injuries or damage caused by his dog. He must therefore be insured as a dog handler against such cases. All instructions given by the judge, organizer or Team Leader are to be accepted and voluntarily executed at the handler's own risk.

Proof of officially required vaccinations (vaccination certificate) must be submitted, upon request, to the judge responsible or Test Manager before the test

▪ **Age Limit**

The dog must have reached the minimum age of 20 months on the first day of the competition.

▪ **Temperament Check**

The judge is to observe the temperament of the dog at the start of and throughout the whole test. The judge is obliged to disqualify any animal showing obvious temperament inadequacies and to note this down in the log book.

The temperament check includes:

- Confidence and composure of the dog around strangers.
- Confidence and composure of the dog during unexpected disturbances.
- Resilience during difficult situations such as extended work periods, several dogs working simultaneously, extremes in temperature and weather, presence of dust and smoke, extreme exposure to noise, or strong, unpleasant odors etc.
- To determine other temperament inadequacies: shyness, nervousness and its associated aggression, aggressive disposition, fearfulness or the like.

▪ **Duties of the Participants**

The team leader is to meet the deadlines for registering his rescue dog team with detailed information about the teams (dog handler and dog). The team leader must report any delay in arrival of the rescue dog team to the Test Manager immediately.

The Team signs in and out for each task with their dogs on their leashes in the start position. Each team member, who is competing in the competition, is to sign in with the judge with the equipment and clothing appropriate for each particular exercise.

▪ **Permitted Aids**

The following aids are permitted as a means of tactical support for search work specifically during the scent work:

- Whistle:
Before the activity begins the judge must be notified about the use of audible whistle sounds.
- Radio Equipment:
An additional device must be handed to one judge to listen along during nose works.
- Identifying harnesses or chain collars. Lights or bells are allowed.
- Water or sponges.

▪ **Score Book**

The scorebook is mandatory for each test participant. It must be presented to the Test Organization Office before the tests. Test scores will be entered by the Test Organizing Officer and confirmed and signed by the judge(s).

A Test is complete when the results have been announced and entered into the log book and returned to the Handler. Any premature termination of the competition exercise is to be recorded in the score book along with an explanation.

▪ **Scoring**

At Open competition for search and rescue dog teams, performances are scored numerically. Only whole points should be awarded. However, fractional points can be awarded for the individual exercises. If the final result for an exercise does not produce a mathematical whole point, this score will be rounded up or down depending on the overall impression of the task. The ranking is based on the total scores achieved. The winner is the team with the highest number of points. Teams with the same number of points are placed equally in the ranking.

Excellent (v)	Very Good (sg)	Good (g)	Satisfactory (b)	Insufficient (m)
max min	max min	max min	max min	max min
100% 96%	95% 90%	89% 80%	79% 70%	69% 0%
5,0 - 5,0	4,5 4,5	4,0 4,0	3,5 3,5	3,0 0
10,0 - 10,0	9,5 9,0	8,5 8,0	7,5 7,0	6,5 0
15,0 - 14,5	14,0 13,5	13,0 12,0	11,5 10,5	10,0 0
20,0 - 19,5	19,0 18,0	17,5 16,0	15,5 14,0	13,5 0
30,0 - 29,0	28,5 27,0	26,5 24,0	23,5 21,0	20,5 0
40,0 38,5	38,0 36,0	25,5 32,0	31,5 28,0	27,5 0
50,0 48,0	47,5 45,0	44,5 40,0	39,5 35,0	34,5 0
60,0 57,5	57,0 54,0	53,5 48,0	47,5 42,0	41,5 0
70,0 67,0	66,5 63,0	62,5 56,0	55,5 49,0	48,5 0
80,0 76,5	76,0 72,0	71,5 64,0	63,5 56,0	55,5 0
100 96,0	95,5 90,0	89,5 80,0	79,5 70,0	69,5 0
200 191,0	190,5 180,0	179,5 160,0	159,5 140,0	139,5 0
300 286,0	285,5 270,0	269,5 240,0	239,5 210,0	209,5 0
400 - 380	379 - 360	359 - 320	319 - 280	279 - 0
600 - 570	569 - 540	539 - 480	479 - 420	419 - 0

▪ **Score Sheets and Forms**

The results are to be transmitted and documented according to the regulations of the umbrella organization conducting the test.

▪ Judges

The Search and Rescue dogs Teams tests may only be carried out by International FCI judges approved by the umbrella organization of the organizer (the FCI-NCO).

A judge may evaluate for a maximum 8 hours in total on any one day. Beyond that, all judging rules and regulations of the organizer's umbrella organization apply accordingly.

The judges' decisions are final.

General Abbreviations

FCI	Fédération Cynologique Internationale
IRO	International Search and Rescue Dog Organization
FCI-NCO	National Canine Organization of the FCI
NRO	National Rescue Dog Organization
SAR	International Trial Rules for Search and Rescue dogs
SAR Team	Search and Rescue Dogs Team
F ,	Tracking Search
FL ,	Area Search
T ,	Rubble Search
L	Avalanche
U	Universal (F +FL +T)
O&D	Obedience and Dexterity
O&D-L ,	Obedience and Dexterity - for the Avalanche
HZ / VC ,	Voice Command
SZ / HD ,	Hand Command
S ,	Supervisor
TJ ,	Test Judge
TM ,	Test Manager
FHL ,	Track Layer
GL ,	Group Leader
TL ,	Team Leader
DH ,	Dog Handler
RDT	Rescue dog and his dog handler

Exercise Rubble Search

The team can be structured freely in terms of the means and solution tactics.

Several dogs can search and find at the same time. The GL decides on the deployment and withdrawal of each search dog. All three dogs must be used in the course of the search work.

The team members should work together and support one another.

The search-ready dog is to be released in the search area without identifying harness and chain collar.

The alert method used by the dog is discretionary.

The rubble search will be evaluated by three judges, one for each dog.

Total Possible Points Rubble Search

Total possible points	400 Points
Finding the victims: 100 p x 3	300 Points
Cooperation and discipline of team	50 Points
Group leader (tactics and their implementation)	50 Points

General Rules:

Search Area: two areas, 5000 m² each.

Victims: the number of victims in each area is 2 - 4 persons / scent work, but we know that the total is 6 victims, in two scent work exercise.

Both areas can be destroyed or partially destroyed building, which can consist of various building materials, spread over one or several levels.

A rubble site has to include dark rooms or hollows and low-lying hiding places buried up to approx. 2 m and high raised hiding places at a minimum height of 2 m. The searching of buildings only is not allowed, although individual rooms can be included in the search area.

The dog must not have any visual and / or physical contact and the covering must be as inconspicuous as possible. The distance between each of the victims must make a clear alert possible. Hiding places may be used more than once, but there is to be no danger of false alerts when changing hiding places. Hiding places used must remain unconcealed when unoccupied.

The victims must be in position 15 minutes before the dog begins to search. The victims are there to assist the judge; they must remain quiet, without giving the handler and / or the dog any help whatsoever. It is not essential that indicated victims are removed from their hiding places. If the judge gives instructions for found victims to be recovered, this will be done by assistants.

Distractions: smouldering fire, running motors, hammering, drumming etc.

Assistants: The search area must have been crisscrossed by at least 3 people with a test dog up to 15 minutes before the first search begins, and it must be crisscrossed by at least 3 people without dogs immediately before and during the search exercise.

Time limit: maximum 20 minutes.

Time for presenting to the judge and receiving information: maximum 5 minutes.

Time for the final report and informing the judges: maximum 5 minutes.

Performance Rules:

All three dogs from team must be used in the course of the search work. The GL decides on each changeover of the search team, with several dog able to be used at the same time.

The rescue dog team must wait with its dogs out of sight of the search area unit until called. The rescue dog team is given a sketch as a description of the location. The search area is visually demarcated or has clearly identifiable boundaries. The Group Leader can use any search system as seems appropriate and also as many dogs as he wishes. The judge must be informed thoroughly of the tactics chosen.

The time starts to run when the team is deemed ready to search by the Group Leader and the judge gives the start signal.

The GL can stay where he wants. The dog handlers must wait for instructions from the judge to the GL.

The DH, dog handler, reports an alert by a dog to his GL. Before DH is allowed to enter the search area, the GL must let the judges at radio communication station where the victim has been located or whether. The judge will then immediately give permission to collect the dog.

At the command of the GL and the Judge near him the dog handler goes to his dog.

The handler takes his assigned judge to the place of alert. Consultation with the GL is acceptable.

If the back-up dog indicates the victim, he reports the find to the GL, who informs his assigned judge of the alert. The judge will then give permission to continue the searching.

The members of Team should work together and support one another.

A HFT may not resume its search work until it has again left the search area. A direct route is always taken to collect the dog. The HF always sends the dog to continue its search from outside the area. It is not permitted to issue new instructions directly from the place of alert.

Should a person who has not been removed from a hiding place be indicated once more, the MF can instruct the HF independently to collect the dog. The MF must inform the PR of this.

The rubble search ends with the report of the third alert by the GL Leader or when the maximum search time has elapsed.

The exercise ends with the announcement of the marks by the judges.

Assessment:

Every person found is awarded 100 points regardless of the quality of the alert, as long as the judge is informed by the Group leader.

Any obvious harassment of the victim by a dog will be marked as minus 50 points.

Every person who is not found scores 0 points.

The non-deployment of a dog will be marked as minus 50 points. Each false alert will be marked as minus 50 points.

Any Injury to a victim leads to disqualification of the Team from the whole competition.

If not all the victims were found, the Cooperation and discipline in team is unsatisfactory and Group Leader work is unsatisfactory.

Exercise Area Search

The team can be structured freely in terms of the means and solution tactics.

Several dogs can search and find at the same time. The GL decides on the deployment and withdrawal of each searching. All three dogs must be used in the course of the search work.

The team members should work together and support one another.

The alert method used by the dog is discretionary.

The area search will be evaluated by three judges, one for each dog.

The team members should work together and support one another. The alert method used by the dog is discretionary.

Total Possible Points Area Search

Total possible points	400 Points
Finding the victims: 100 p x 3	300 Points
Cooperation and discipline in team	50 Points
Group leader (tactics and their implementation)	50 Points

General Rules:

Search Area: two areas, approx. 50.000 m² (500 x 100 m) each. The borders and middle line of the search area are marked.

Victims: the number of victims in each area is 2 - 4 persons / scent work, but we know that the total is 6 victims, in two scent work exercise.

At least 50% covered and with limited overview, may contain individual buildings. The dog has visible and/or physical contact, however, hides which are typical for the terrain, such as elevated hides (e.g. deer stands) that are not visible or reachable for the dog, are permitted.

The victims' hiding places must be at least 10 m apart. Hiding places up to 3 meters in height are allowed but at 20m from the border. The wind conditions are to be considered in particular. Hiding places may be used more than once.

The victims must be in position 15 minutes before the dog begins to search. The victims are there to assist the judge; they must lie or sit and remain quiet, without giving the handler and / or the dog any help whatsoever.

Assistants: The search area must have been crisscrossed by at least 3 people with a test dog up to 15 minutes before the first search begins, and it must be crisscrossed by at least 3 people without dogs immediately before and during the search exercise.

Time limit: maximum 20 minutes

Time for presenting to the judge and receiving information: maximum 5 minutes

Time for the final report and informing the judges: maximum 5 minutes

Performance Rules:

Three judges will be assigned for this discipline. All of the judges will follow a rescue dog sport team in the search area. If the three dogs are deployed at the same time than the team leader and his assigned judge has to follow the third dog engaged in the field. In addition, the team is assigned a certain area within the area in which the team can move freely, under the control of the assigned judge to the team leader.

The rescue dog sport teams must wait with their dogs out of sight of the search area unit until called. The rescue dog sport team leader is given a sketch as a description of the location. The search area is visually demarcated or has clearly identifiable boundaries.

All three dogs from team must be used in the course of the search work. The GL decides on each changeover of the search team, with several dog able to be used at the same time.

The rescue dog team must wait with its dogs out of sight of the search area unit until called. The rescue dog team is given a sketch as a description of the location. The search area is visually demarcated or has clearly identifiable boundaries. The Group Leader can use any search system as seems appropriate and also as many dogs as he wishes. The judge must be informed thoroughly of the tactics chosen.

The time starts to run when the team is deemed ready to search by the Group Leader, after that the judge gives the start signal.

The GL can stay where he wants. The dog handler must wait for instructions from the judge to the GL.

The DH, dog handler reports an alert by a dog to his GL. Before DH is allowed to enter the search area, the GL must let the judges at radio communication station where the victim has been located or whether. The judge will then immediately give permission to collect the dog.

At the command of the GL and the Judge near him the dog handler goes to his dog

The dog handler takes his assigned judge to the place of alert. Consultation with the GL is acceptable. If the back-up dog indicates the victim, he reports the find to the GL, who informs his assigned judge of the alert. The judge will then give permission to continue the searching.

The members of Team should work together and support one another.

The exercise ends with the announcement of the marks by the judges.

Assessment:

Every person found is awarded 100 points regardless of the quality of the alert, as long as the judge is informed by the Group leader.

Any obvious harassment of the victim by a dog will be marked as minus 50 points.

Every person who is not found scores 0 points.

The non-deployment of a dog will be marked as minus 50 points. Each false alert will be marked as minus 50 points.

Any injury to a victim leads to disqualification of the Team from the whole competition.

If not all the victims were found, the Cooperation and discipline in team is unsatisfactory and Group Leader work is unsatisfactory.

Exercise Tracking Search

The team has a free choice of means and solution tactics.

The MF decides on each changeover of the search team. All three of the rescue dog sport teams must be used in the course of the search work. Every team used must find at least 1 object or perform 2 changes of direction.

The team members should work together and support one another. The type of alert used by the dogs are one position sit, down, stand or barking.

Total Possible Points Tracking Search

Total Possible Points	400 Points
Picking up the scent trail	10 Points
Following the scent trail	100 Points
Article Identification	20 Points
Articles, 8 x 10p	80 Points
Detection of a person	100 Points
Cooperation and discipline of team	40 Points
Team leader (tactics and their implementation)	50 Points

General Rules:

Foreign scent trail: 2000 paces

Time: 120 minutes.

8 changes in direction, which can be acute, right angled or obtuse angled.

The scent trail should be as natural as possible, appropriate to the terrain and including changing terrain. The terrain can include forest, grassland and fields and traverse roads and streets.

The scent layer walks the entire trail at a normal pace; whilst laying the trail he must not scrape the surface or stop. He must hand the judge a detailed plan of the scent trail with all essential information, such as sequence of articles and marked points along the course of the trail. GPS recording is compulsory.

Starting point: a well-worn article to be identified belonging to the scent layer (maximum shoe size, pieces of clothing reduced down to this size are also allowed) in an area measuring 30 m x 30 m. The left and right sides of this area are marked out along the ground.

The person laying the trail enters the testing area from the left or right-side line and deposits within the area the article to be identified, which marks the actual approach (beginning of the trail). After waiting a short time, the trail layer then walks at a normal pace in the direction indicated.

Articles: 8 numbered, well-worn articles of daily use belonging to the person laying the trail, maximum shoe size, not markedly different in colour from the terrain.

The articles must be placed on, not next to, the scent trail. The articles must be placed at least 40 steps before or after the corner.

The trail layer must identify the point at which each article is deposited on the diagram of the scent trail. The articles are also marked or well described.

End of the trail: trail layer, lying or sitting at the end of the trail.

The person laying the scent trail must make his way to the end of it at least 30 minutes before the search begins

Time limit: maximum 60 minutes including the detection of the article of identification.

Time for presenting to the judge and receiving information: maximum 5 minutes.

Time for the final report and informing the judges: maximum 5 minutes.

Performance Rules:

During completion of the practice trail laid by the tracklayer the dog does not have to follow the disturbed ground in the classic manner of the sport but may also forage whilst following it. The key factor is to complete the trail in chronological order by indicating the articles and finding the person.

After being called, the testing area is clearly described to GL by the judge. The dog may be led off leash or by a 10 m leash on a chain collar or harness. The alert method used by the dog is discretionary.

The other dogs of team must be led on a leash attached to a chain collar or harness.

Permitted types of alerts on finding articles are picking up or indicating, or both alternately. When picking up, the dog can stand still, sit down or come to the handler. When indicating, the dog can be down, sit or stand. The time starts when the GL is ready to search and after that the Judge gives the signal to start.

The judge defines the testing area for the GL beyond which the Dog Handler may move freely. If necessary, the appointed Dog Handler takes his dog off the leash and instructs it to search for the article to be identified. The dog must forage for the identification article within three minutes, during which time the Dog Handler may assist it with voice commands and / or hand signals. Once the article has been found, the Dog Handler puts his dog on the leash if necessary and sends it to complete the scent trail.

Should the dog not find the article to be identified and yet still pick up the scent, after reporting to the Judge via the GL, the dog handler may follow his dog or have it pause to be put on the leash or for a changeover of dog

Should the dog neither find the identification object nor pick up the scent, the GL can deploy another dog after three minutes. The second dog is briefed on the ID object and takes up the trail from there.

During the exercise the dog should follow the track left behind by the track layer whereas the handler in the off-leash search also has to stick to the 10 m distance to the dog.

The judge follows the dog over the scent trail at an appropriate distance. If the dog have strayed more than approximately 30 meters from the scent trail, the search work is stopped by the Judge.

The Dog Handler is permitted to interrupt the tracking search. Any breaks taken are done so at the expense of the overall time available.

During the tracking work the Dog Handler is allowed to clean his dog's head, eyes and nose and to give water to the dog.

As soon as the dog has found the article, it must immediately indicate without any influence from the handler or GL. The dog handler confirms the find to the judge by holding the article aloft. The dog handler can let the article at the place where it was found for another dogs (like a tactics) or can take it.

During the indication the D remains lying down, sitting, or standing at the article or the FHL. The D has to show this behaviour until the DH has reached the article or the person. The D has to show a clear behaviour style so that the alert behaviour is definitively clear. The D has to assume the chosen position immediately and behave calmly at the VP without bothering him.

The GL and dog handlers go to the Judge with their dogs on the leash to sign out and take up the start position. The GL hands over the objects found.

The exercise ends with the announcement of the marks by the judge.

Assessment:

The dog should show a positive search behaviour and a certain point out to the articles. Straying from the trail by the dog is not incorrect.

The indication of the identification object is awarded 10 points. If the identification object is not indicated by the first dog, it is awarded 0 points. The second dog can now only achieve the maximum 10 points for picking up the scent.

Every article that is not found or is not alerted independently scores 0 points.

The non-deployment of a dog will be marked as minus 50 points.

Any obvious harassment of the FHL has 24 points deducted.

Any injury to the trail layer leads to disqualification of the team from the whole test.

If not all the victims were not found, the Cooperation and discipline in team is highly unsatisfactory and Group Leader work is highly unsatisfactory.

The English version is the authentic one.

These rules were approved by the FCI General Committee, in Amsterdam, 3rd September 2024.