

National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)

Wilderness Trailing I, I with Evidence, II & III Field Tests

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

- These tests have been promulgated by NSDA to assist handler/K-9 teams in a prerequisite to operational suitability for typical search incidents.
- The NSDA prerequisites represent those items that we believe will allow the candidate to have the opportunity to safely and successfully complete the Wilderness Trailing Tests.

2. OBJECTIVE:

- **The Trailing I Wilderness Field Test** demonstrates the ability of a trailing K-9 team to locate a subject within a prescribed time period. This ability combined with the demonstrated ability of the handler to correctly read the behavior of the K-9, the ability of the K-9 to perform a trained final response when it detects a person and the ability of the handler to formulate and execute a plan will constitute the team field qualification certification for NSDA.
- **The Trailing I with Evidence Field Test** demonstrates the ability of a trailing K-9 team to locate a subject within a prescribed time period as well as evidence dropped along the trail. This ability combined with the demonstrated ability of the handler to correctly read the behavior of the K-9, the ability of the K-9 to perform a trained final response when it detects a person and the ability of the handler to formulate and execute a plan constitutes the team field qualification certification for NSDA.
- **The Trailing II Field Test** demonstrates the ability of a trailing K-9 team to locate a subject within a prescribed time period, but aged for less time than Trailing I. This ability combined with the demonstrated ability of the handler to correctly read the behavior of the K-9, the ability of the K-9 to perform a trained final response when it detects a person and the ability of the handler to formulate and execute a plan constitutes the team field certification for NSDA.
- Trailing II is a prerequisite for both Trailing I tests.
- **The Wilderness Trailing III Field Test** demonstrates the ability of a trailing K-9 team (handler and K-9) to locate a subject within a prescribed time period, but aged for less time and less distance than Wilderness Trailing II. This ability combined with the demonstrated ability of the handler to correctly read the behavior of the K-9, the ability of the K-9 to show a trained final response when it detects a person and the ability of the handler to formulate and execute a plan constitutes the team certification for NSDA.
- Wilderness Trailing III shall not be a prerequisite to Wilderness Trailing II. However, the Evaluator may require completion of Wilderness Trailing III prior to testing for Wilderness Trailing II.
- These tests are designed to simulate an actual search and not team training. You will be asked to approach it as such.

3. GENERAL:

- The handler may be instructed to submit copies of their documents to the Evaluator via mail or e-mail before the test. Paperwork may not be returned.
- The test shall not begin if all copies of the prerequisite paperwork have not been presented.
- Testing shall be of the handler and K-9 only.
- This test is not intended to be a footstep-to-footstep sports tracking event. Deviation from the trail is permitted if progress towards the end of the trail continues.
- A K-9 team shall not be required to test in conditions other than those in which it would be reasonably expected to search.

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- Handlers may draw numbers for the order in which they are to be tested unless there is a strong, overriding reason for the convenience of the handler or Evaluator.
- No electronic correction collars are permitted to be operational while the K-9 team is being evaluated. The K-9 may wear an electronic correction collar if the transmitter is turned off and given to the Evaluator until the test is completed.
- Distractions shall not be intentionally placed in the search area.

4. EVALUATORS:

- The evaluation shall be conducted by a designated NSDA Principal Evaluator with the option of a second Evaluator or Apprentice Evaluator.
- The Evaluator(s) shall terminate the test if, in their opinion, it becomes hazardous to any of the participants.
- The Evaluator(s) shall have discretion in the administration and evaluation of all portions of the test.

5. TEST SITE PREPARATION:

For All Wilderness Trailing Tests:

- An aerial map may be provided to the testing team and utilized if the topographical is not descriptive of the terrain.
- The trail shall be laid in a wilderness environment and shall be any combination of dirt roads, paths/trails, light brush/trees/woods and meadow type cross-country settings. Desert settings shall include vegetation.
- There shall be two (2) to three (3) changes of different surfaces with a minimum distance of seventy-five (75) feet each (mulch, dirt, grass, weeds, pine needles, wood chips, etc.). The area shall not contain large areas of extreme terrain, i.e. rocks, gravel, hard packed earth, etc.
- The area chosen shall be large enough so that the team is not "funneled" to the end by fences or other barriers.
- The start area shall be three thousand (3,000) square feet in size. The start area shall be flagged at four (4) extremities. The terrain shall determine the shape. The subject shall have entered and exited the start area to lay the trail. The start area shall be located in such a way that the K-9 team can readily access the start area and its perimeter.
- A 4x4 gauze scent pad shall be collected from the subject by the Principal Evaluator at the time the trail is laid. The pad shall be rubbed across the subject's arms, neck and hair for at least one (1) minute and placed into a sealable plastic bag by the subject. The bag shall be labeled with the time of collection.
- There shall be no indication of direction of travel at the trail's start.
- One (1) re-start is allowed at the beginning of the trail after leaving the start area. If the K-9 loses the scent along the trail, the team is allowed to re-acquire the trail.
- This is designed to be an on-lead trailing evaluation to allow the handler and K-9 to perform as a team.
- At the conclusion of the exercise, the handler shall be required to indicate on the map the route traveled and the location of the subject.
- On the last leg of the test, if environmental conditions allow "air scenting" of the subject, this shall not be an automatic disqualifier as long as the K-9 team has made the last turn. The Evaluator shall consider the overall performance, strongly keeping in mind that this is a trailing evaluation, not an air scent test.

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In Addition to the Test Site Preparation for all Tests, Wilderness Trailing I and Trailing I with Evidence Tests and Wilderness trailing II shall include:

- The trail should cross two (2) of the following terrain obstacles:
 - a. not more than one hundred (100) feet of heavy brush, marshy area, etc.
 - b. creek, drainage or gorge, etc., easily traversed.
 - c. maximum of one (1) fence or barrier easily negotiated without risk of harm to the team.
 - d. lightly traveled road.
- One (1) person, other than the person who walked through the start area to add contamination, shall cross the trail two (2) times no less than 500 feet from the beginning or end of the trail. For the Wilderness Trailing I Test, the cross tracks shall be added one to eleven (1-11) hours after the trail was laid. For the Wilderness Trailing II Test, the cross tracks shall be one to seven (1-7) hours after the trail was laid.
- The team must acquire the trail within fifteen (15) minutes from this three thousand (3,000) square foot start area marked with flags by the Evaluator(s). One (1) hour before the beginning of the test, one (1) person shall walk through the start area to add contamination.

In Addition to Test Site Preparation for All Wilderness Tests, Wilderness Trailing III Test:

- There shall be no cross tracks.
- One half (½) hour before the beginning of the test, one (1) person shall walk through the start area to add contamination.

6. THE TRAIL:

Wilderness Trailing I and Wilderness Trailing II

- The length of the trail shall be one and one quarter (1-¼) to one and one half (1-½) miles in total length and laid in such a way that the K-9 shall not air scent in to the subject.
- The age of the trail shall be twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) hours for Trailing I and Trailing I w/Evidence, at the discretion of the Evaluator(s). The age of the trail for Trailing II shall be four (4) to eight (8) hours, at the discretion of the Evaluator(s). The aging shall be done so that it is convenient for the subject and Evaluator(s) but also so that it allows for optimum conditions.
- The laying of the trail should be timed to avoid running of the trail during extreme temperatures or during inclement weather conditions.
- The trail shall have four (4) opportunities for the team being evaluated to make decisions and have choices in determining the trail the subject has walked, i.e. forks in the trail, an intersection in the dirt road, or a cut off of a trail into brush or grass made by humans or animals. Crossing a paved or concrete road is permitted.
- The trail shall also include four (4) to six (6) turns. Changes of direction shall be greater than 45°, both to the right and the left. A wrong decision at a turn shall take the team even farther away from the subject's footpath.

For Wilderness Trailing I with Evidence (in addition to the above description)

- The subject shall stop at four (4) locations along the trail and drop evidence to the side of the trail. The evidence shall not be able to be seen by the handler from more than twenty (20) feet and shall not be covered.
- The K-9 team is required to locate and identify at least three (3) locations of the evidence. The handler

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shall not guide nor restrain the K-9 in order to influence the K-9 to locate the evidence. At the start of the trail, the handler shall describe to the Evaluator what the K-9's evidence response will be.

- The evidence shall not exceed the size of a mature adult's shoe or be smaller than an adult glove, shall be porous in nature, shall be well scented by the subject and shall be of an earth tone color. It shall be of a material that will hold scent.

Wilderness Trailing III

- The length of the trail shall be three quarters (3/4) to one (1) mile in total length and laid in such a way that the K-9 may not air scent in to the subject.
- The age of the trail shall be one and one half (1-½) to three (3) hours, at the discretion of the Evaluator. The aging shall be done so that it is convenient for the subject and Evaluator(s) but also so that it allows for optimum conditions.
- The laying of the trail should be timed to avoid running of the trail during extreme temperatures or during inclement weather conditions.
- The trail shall have three (3) opportunities for the team being evaluated to make decisions and have choices in determining the trail the subject has walked, i.e. forks in the trail, an intersection in the dirt road, or a cut off of a trail into brush or grass made by humans or animals. Crossing a paved or concrete road is permitted.
- The trail shall also include three (3) to four (4) turns. Changes of direction shall be greater than 45°, both to the right and the left. A wrong decision at a turn shall take the team even farther away from the subject's footpath.

7. EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS:

- A pack check is not a pre-test requirement but the handler is expected to carry adequate first aid supplies and water for the handler/K-9 team. NSDA has published a recommended equipment list but, for this test, it is the responsibility of the handler to be adequately equipped and attired.
- Although a pack check is not part of the evaluation, lack of adequate equipment may be a reason for the exam to be stopped and considered a failure. For example, if the handler runs out of water, the Evaluator may stop the test if there is a danger to the health and wellbeing of the handler and/or K-9.

8. SAFETY:

- The Evaluator(s) may terminate the test at any time if unsafe conditions exist or if either member of the K-9 team or the subject is in jeopardy.

9. BRIEFING OF HANDLER:

- At the test site, the Evaluator shall carefully explain the Point Last Seen (aka Start Area) and shall provide the handler with a good quality aerial or topographic map of the area.
- The handler shall address the Evaluator as though the Evaluator were a Search Manager unfamiliar with search K-9 teams and shall introduce the team, explain its capabilities, and ask questions pertinent to the assignment.

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10. TEST TIMING:

- The team shall have ninety (90) minutes to complete the test.
- The team shall have ten (10) minutes to develop a plan and exercise the canine, but shall not walk in or near the start area until they begin the test. The ten (10) minutes shall be in addition to the ninety (90) minutes of test timing.
- Timing of the test shall commence when the handler enters the start area, takes a scent inventory, casts the K-9 or scents the K-9.
- The team has a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes to determine the direction of travel once they enter the start area. The fifteen (15) minutes shall not be in addition to the ninety (90) minutes of test timing.
- Breaks are part of the evaluation time.

11. TERMINATION OF FIELD TEST:

- The test may be terminated if:
 - ✓ the K-9 team is moving away from the direction of travel on the trail and, in the Evaluator's opinion given current wind and terrain conditions, moves beyond a reasonable distance so as not to be able to re-acquire the trail.
 - ✓ the K-9 team is unable to indicate the direction of travel within fifteen (15) minutes of beginning the test.
 - ✓ the K-9 team is unable to indicate the direction of travel on any other part of the trail for an unreasonably long period of time.
 - ✓ the Evaluator determines that the remainder of the search shall not result in finding the subject.
 - ✓ a false alert is given by the canine and called by the handler.
 - ✓ The handler cued the K-9's final response.
 - ✓ the Evaluator determines the team has become lost.
 - ✓ the handler is abusive to the K-9 including, but not limited to, verbal abuse or lack of proper supplies.
 - ✓ the handler allows his/her K-9 to work to such a point that, in the opinion of the Evaluator(s), the K-9's health is at risk.
 - ✓ the K-9 demonstrates unwarranted aggressive behavior towards a person or K-9 while outside the canine's primary enclosure.

12. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

- The following requirements must be successfully completed in order to pass the Wilderness Trailing III Test.
 - ✓ The K-9's indication matches what the handler articulated before the start of the test.
 - ✓ The K-9 locates the subject within the allotted time and performs the appropriate final response.
 - ✓ The handler is able to show the subject's route and location on the search map.

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- ✓ The handler is able to articulate meteorology relevant to the trail.

13. RE-TESTS:

- A re-test is additional attempt of an entire test.
- One (1) testing fee covers an initial test and a re-test, if necessary, within one (1) year of the time of the test payment.
- If a Handler would like to re-test during the same testing event, the scoring sheet of the initial test must be marked with “re-test immediately”. If the Evaluator marks the initial failed attempt as “re-test in three (3) or six (6) months”, the handler shall not be eligible to re-test during the same testing event.
- A re-test requires a new set of paperwork.
- Re-tests during the same testing event shall be at the discretion of the Evaluator, only if time permits and there is justification.
- A team that was unable to perform the search in the designated time allowed, missed the subject or called a false final response shall not necessarily warrant a re-test during the same testing event.
- A test that is discontinued and cannot be resumed due to weather or safety concerns shall not count as a failure. A re-test at the same testing event may be provided at the Evaluator’s discretion. If time does not allow for a re-test, the scoring sheet shall be marked “Discontinued” with the reason stated. The testing fee shall be credited to the re-test but not refunded.
- A copy of the Scoring Sheet shall be given to the handler.

14. RE-CERTIFICATION:

- Re-certification is required every two (2) years.