

National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)

Wilderness Cadaver Field Test

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- This test has been promulgated by NSDA to assess the handler/K-9 team's ability as to operational suitability for typical large area search incidents for deceased subjects.
- The NSDA prerequisites represent those items that we believe will allow the candidate to have the opportunity to safely and successfully complete this test.

2. OBJECTIVES

- This test of a Cadaver Search K-9 team (handler/K-9) will demonstrate:
 - ✓ the team's ability to successfully search a 40-80 acres wilderness area within a two (2) hour period,
 - ✓ the ability of the K-9 to identify the location of one (1) to (2) concealed cadaver sources, with a trained final response that does not disturb the cadaver source.
- The handler shall be responsible for formulating, articulating and executing their search strategy and providing the Evaluator with a description of their K-9's trained final response.

3. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- You may be instructed to submit copies of your documents to the Evaluator via mail or email prior to the testing event. The documentation shall not be returned.
- The test will not be given if all copies of the prerequisite paperwork have not been presented.
- Testing shall be of the handler and K-9 only. No flankers shall be permitted.
- This test is designed to simulate an actual search and not team training. The handler shall be asked to approach it as such.
- The handler shall deploy the K-9 on its wilderness cadaver search command.
- No electronic correction collars are permitted to be operational while the K-9 team is being evaluated. The K-9 may wear an electronic collar as long as the transmitter is turned off and given to the Evaluator until the test is completed. GPS collars that also deliver an electronic shock must have the pins removed.
- The location of the cadaver source must be based on the K-9's trained final response.
- A team shall not be required to test in conditions other than those in which it would be reasonably expected to search.
- The handler shall mark the area of the K-9's trained final response within three (3) feet of the cadaver source.
- Females in season shall be tested last.

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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 shall remain within normal speaking distance of the handler at all times during the evaluation, in a manner not to interfere with the work of the handler/K-9 team.
- The Evaluator(s) shall have discretion in the administration and evaluation of all portions of the test.

5. TEST SITE PREPARATION

- The optimum size of the search area shall be forty (40) to eighty (80) acres.
- Adjustments to the search area size shall be made using the NSDA Acreage Adjustment Chart for this test, along with the experience and knowledge of the Evaluator.
- Cadaver Source:
 - ✓ The cadaver source(s) shall be well concealed on the surface.
 - ✓ The cadaver source shall be placed not less than one (1) hour prior to the test or longer than twelve (12) hours.
 - ✓ Cadaver sources shall be comprised of one or more of the following. The total used will be no less than five (5) pounds.
 - a. Wet and/or dry bone.
 - b. Wet and/or dry blood. It could be fresh or old blood.
 - c. Tissue, no less than a pound and a half (i.e. whole placenta)
 - d. Other human matter.
 - ✓ An effort shall be made to utilize multiple sources on the test.
- The boundaries of the search area may be either obvious natural features (streams, ridgelines, etc.), manmade boundaries like roads or trails, marked or flagged. Boundary lines shall be marked on the map provided to the handler. The corners of the search area shall be clearly marked.
- If a boundary is not easily found or clearly marked, upon questioning by the handler, the Evaluator may assist the handler with finding the boundary.
- Search areas should be comprised of light to medium ground cover or trees.

6. DISTRACTIONS

- Clues and distractions shall not be intentionally placed in the search area. Although handlers should be clue aware, clue awareness is not a criterion for successful completion of this test.
- There may be natural distracters such as other animals (dead or alive), terrain, weather and

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any other distracter one would find on an actual search.

7. SAFETY

- The Evaluator must be able to contact base by radio and the handler by radio.
- The Principal Evaluator may terminate the test if, in their opinion,
 - ✓ it becomes hazardous to the health or safety of any of the participants or to the K-9.
 - ✓ handler is abusive to their K-9, including but not limited to, verbal abuse or lack of proper supplies.
 - ✓ handler is unable to call the K-9 off wildlife or livestock in or near the search area. The K-9 must respond to the handler's command(s) to return to work.
 - ✓ They see the K-9, outside of its primary enclosure showing signs of unprovoked aggression (growling, snapping, and lunging) towards another K-9 or person.

8. EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- NSDA has published a recommended equipment list but a pack check is not a test prerequisite. For this test, it is the responsibility of the handler to be adequately equipped and attired, including adequate first aid supplies and water for the handler/K-9 team.
- The use of a GPS by the handler is recommended; however, the use of GPS is not required, if the handler is using another form of navigation such as map and compass.

9. BRIEFING OF HANDLER

- At the briefing, the Evaluator shall carefully explain the area's boundaries and known hazards and shall provide the handler with a good quality aerial or topographic map of the area with the boundaries drawn on it. The handler may request the GPS co-ordinates of the boundary corners.
- The handler shall address the Evaluator as though the Evaluator were a search manager unfamiliar with search K-9 teams. The handler shall then introduce the team, explain its capabilities, and ask questions pertinent to the assignment as though it were an actual search.
- The handler shall describe how the K-9 will indicate the presence of hidden cadaver source(s) and what the trained final response will be. The response must not overly disturb the source.

10. TEST TIMING

- The handler shall have a maximum time of fifteen (15) minutes to formulate their search plan prior to the beginning of the test. The handler shall then explain their search plan to the Evaluator.
- Timing shall commence after the handler has advised the Evaluator of the search plan and has deployed the K-9 in the search area.

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- The team shall have two (2) hours to complete the test. Breaks will be included in the two (2) hour time limit.
- One (1) to two (2) sources may be present in the area. After finding the first source the handler is expected to continue to search the area either finding a second source, reaching the end of their time, or declaring the area cleared. If they find a second source the test is then concluded.

11. KNOWLEDGE AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- During the test, as applicable, the handler should demonstrate:
 - ✓ the ability to work and control the K-9 to effectively search the area.
 - ✓ that the handler and K-9 have adequate agility and stamina for a search of two (2) hours.
 - ✓ that the handler recognizes and tells the Evaluator when the K-9 detects the odor of human decomposition.
 - ✓ that the handler behaves professionally during the test.
- The handler will also inform the Evaluator of changes made to his/her initial search plan and provide the reason for the change of strategy.

12. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

- The following requirements shall be successfully completed in order to pass this test.
 - ✓ The Handler shall demonstrate the ability to work and control the K-9 to effectively search the area.
 - ✓ The Handler shall demonstrate the ability to plan an efficient search, best utilizing wind, terrain, topography and existing environmental conditions to provide effective coverage of the terrain given the time constraints of the test.
 - ✓ The handler shall demonstrate recognition of either member of the K-9 team working ineffectively and takes action to compensate for or remedy the situation.
 - ✓ The handler and K-9 have the ability to work effectively to find cadaver source(s), with the additional presence of an Evaluator or evaluator(s) accompanying the K-9 team.
 - ✓ The K-9 locates the cadaver source(s) and gives the trained final response as described by the handler and within the allotted time.
 - ✓ The handler marks the cadaver source(s) within the three (3) foot allowable distance.
 - ✓ The handler shall report clearly and accurately on the map the following information (map documentation may be completed at the conclusion of the test):

A. Areas covered

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B. Routes taken

C. Wind direction and other observed environmental factors that may be pertinent to the search effort

D. Location(s) of the cadaver source(s)

- ✓ K-9 did not have a false alert that was called by handler.
- ✓ K-9 did not attempt to ingest or overly disturb the cadaver source(s).
- ✓ Handler did not cue the K-9 for a trained final response.
- ✓ K-9 did not urinate/mark or defecate on or within three (3) feet of the cadaver source(s).

13. RE-TESTS

- A re-test is an additional attempt of the entire test.
- One 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 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 and the handler shall be allowed one attempt in the following six (6) months. The testing fee will 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.