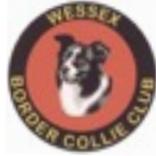


# Wessex Border Collie Club

## Introduction to Working Trials



Working trials and sheep herding - unlike obedience, flyball and agility - both provide border collies with the kind of stimuli that they will respond to naturally. Herding and tracking are what they would choose to do if they were in the wild, for amusement or to hunt for food, without human interference. How many of your dogs go out for a walk without putting their noses to the ground to check who or what has gone there before them? All we need do is to channel their instincts to suit our sports.

There are three sections to working trials - agility, control and nosework. The control and agility, by and large, can be taught to any relatively obedient collie to an acceptable standard. Control consists of heelwork, retrieve, stays and a send away. Agility consists of a nine-foot long jump, a three-foot clear jump and a six-foot scale. It sounds difficult but techniques once taught will enable the averagely agile collie to clear these without too much difficulty. The agility obstacles are the same throughout all levels of trialling, except at the lowest level where they are easier.

Nosework is the most important part of working trials because if the dog is keen to track half the battle is won. Having said that, all dogs can track with varying degrees of success, from the diminutive flat faced Pekingese to the Bloodhound, the undoubted master of the art.

With this in mind, the main focus of Wessex BC Club's training day was how to start tracking with your dog.



Dave Currier present certificates and "most promising" rosette

Two very experienced trainers were on hand to take each of the attendees through the process. Dave Currier has vast working trials experience with Weimaraners and more recently a Pointer. He is an accredited dog trainer and runs the activity ring at Crufts for the Kennel Club. Alun Jenkins was a Metropolitan Police inspector in charge of training police dogs and handlers. Now retired, he has trained many enthusiasts with different breeds of dogs for trials work.

There are several different levels, or stakes, in Working Trials. The Introductory and the CD (Companion Dog) stakes include a search square but no tracking. UD (Utility Dog), WD (Working Dog) and TD (Tracking Dog) stakes comprise a half mile track with a couple of small articles (three in TD) to find along the way. The final article marks the end of the track. These could be something like a three inch by one inch strip of carpet or leather, or a matchbox. The age of the track varies from half an hour up to three hours as you move up the stakes. Also included in

the nosework section for these three stakes is a search within a 25 yard square for four articles - also quite small. Tracks and squares can be on nice short grass, plough, stubble, tall heather - even on snowy or waterlogged fields. It depends what land is available, the season and what part of the country you are in.

In the morning, each dog and handler at the training day practiced over each of the three agility obstacles, set low, before being introduced to tracking and search square techniques in the afternoon.



Thanks to Diane Whiting and Alun Jenkins ( in the background)

Diane Whiting was dragged away from catering duties to demonstrate the three agility obstacles at full height/length with four year old Eric (Sheltysham So Esoteric) who has trial qualifications CDex, UDex and WDex. He also worked a demonstration search square, finding all four articles within the allowed five minutes.

The trick to successful training is to make sure your dog never fails to find his articles in the square or along the track. Each dog watched as a favourite toy or fun item like a ball was put down at increasing distances from him. He was then asked to find it while on a long tracking line. Once the articles on the tracks were out of sight, the dog had to start really working with his nose to find it. Fresh ground - ground that had not been walked over previously that day - was used for each new mini-track so that the dogs in training were not confused by other scents. Treats were put along the track to keep the dog keen, and the dog was rewarded either with treats or a game with a tuggy or ball on finding an article.

All of those participating had their appetites thoroughly whetted for more, and asked for another training day in the future.

The prize for most promising newcomer was awarded to Lawrence Clark and his WSD pup Meg. Meg was the pup used by Shepherd Robert Putnam at Wessex Herding Day, the day before the Working Trial Day, to demonstrate raw herding instinct. What a talented little girl she is!



End of day presentation of certificates and rosette

Want to know more? Go to <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/activities/working-trials> .

If you would like to go to a Working Trial, a list of events can be found if you click on "Calendar" at [www.workingtrialsworld.co.uk](http://www.workingtrialsworld.co.uk). Invariably, trials people are friendly and happy to speak to newcomers about their sport.

Dave Currier's website is [www.onetonedogtraining.com](http://www.onetonedogtraining.com) .