**Rules 2023**

**General:**

Owners or handlers entering dogs in a trial do so at their own risk and agree to the rules and code of conduct for Scent Ops.

Owners are responsible for any damage that their dog may inflict to objects or premises during the search.

Dogs should be a minimum age of 8 months for entry.

Dogs may compete in flat collars, harnesses or soft martingale collars, bandanas are also permitted and dogs may wear a coat. No choke chains, prong collars or any other equipment deemed punitive by the judges or host may be used.

Dogs can work on or off line and swap during test unless specified on entry form.

Harsh handling will not be tolerated and will result in elimination.

Search areas will have a clearly defined start line and time will start when competitor says they are ready or they cross the start line.

Handlers must let the judges know how they will call a find before the start of the test.

Incorrect calls will result in deduction of points but the search continues.

Hides should not be visible and should be prepared as per the odour guidelines.

Indication should be obvious and non-destructive- if the judge thinks property may be damaged then they may stop the search.

If the dog removes the odour/shell points will be deducted.

Handlers are permitted to touch items to encourage the dog to search.

Fouling in the area will result in elimination and competitors will be expected to clean up any fouling themselves.

Dogs may be rewarded in the area and the time will stop between finds, time will re start as soon as the dog is re tasked or continues with searching.

Food may be used to reward but must be of a non-crumbly texture and fed from hand or toy, not the floor, handlers must take care not to contaminate the search areas and points may be deducted for dropping food.

Bitches in season are not allowed at a trial.

Handlers or spectators may not divulge any information about the search, the location of the hide, or their performance (aside from a thumbs up or thumbs down) until all teams have run for the particular class. Even innocent discussion can inadvertently cue handlers as to the circumstances of the search in a way that may bias their performance. At the discretion of the Event Committee, persons discussing a search may be excused from the trial and asked to leave the trial grounds. Handlers are responsible for ensuring that any person at the trial with them is aware of the prohibition against discussing searches.

**Levels:**

You may start at any level but you cannot move down a level unless entering the diamond league, which will be a permanent move.

You may enter more than one level for competition, but they must be consecutive levels, i.e level 2 and 3 or 3 and 4, points for the league will count towards both levels entered. You cannot drop down from the lowest level entered initially, so if you enter a 3 and 4 you cannot then enter a 2.

All teams competing can gain points for the champions league table. There is a separate diamond league for veteran dogs/down graded teams.

Teams can be down graded to a lower level due to age/injury, but then will not be eligible for the champion league and can only gain points for the diamond league. Achievement certificates will still be awarded.

With the exception on level 1, you may stay at any level as long as you wish, gaining league points and achievement certificates or giving more experience to dog/handler. League winners must move up on the conclusion of the league with eh exception of Gold winners who are no longer eligible for Silver but may continue to compete at Gold whilst Platinum levels are established.

A win at CLUB makes the team no longer eligible for that level, club. A win at Bronze also makes that team ineligible for CLUB only.

Trials can be advertised for wins towards achievement certificates such as high hides or indoor search specialist if the host wishes.

Examples of achievement certificates are; Line handling, Indoor searching, Outdoor searching , High Hides, Buried/Deep hides, Free searching and may also include venue specialisms such as farm or stadium/seating. Hosts can request any other specialisms according to their venues.

Level excellence certificates are available for four placings at one level but must have been gained from mixed trials, one of which should be indoors and one of which should be outdoors and can only be awarded once for each level.

Handlers must keep track of their achievement and complete the application form to receive their certificates.

League points cannot be carried over to the next level.

The objectives for each level are aimed to be progressive with focused training goals.

Trials are ‘operational style’ so venues and areas will vary, at levels 1 and 2 a village hall may be used as the emphasis is on building dog and handler confidence. From level 3 upwards the venues should be varied and offer ‘real life’ challenges.

Competitors must run in assigned order- this running order will be set by the host and should be random but will take into account odours being used and other trained odours a dog may be trained on.

Each level with have a set time and handlers can request a time check. Level 6 the time will be set by the judge on the day and competitors informed before they start.

Dogs and handlers may run NFC at up to two levels above or below their current competitive level.

NFC dogs should run at the end of the class and the judge may move the hides to give a similar but still blind test to the handler so feedback and scoring can be realistic for the team.

**Hosting:**

Hosts must carry their own liability insurance.

Scent Ops trials hosted by two different clubs may not be held closer than 50 miles in distance on the same day unless previously agreed between hosts.

A club may choose which levels to offer at their trials, taking into account demand, resources, site availability, and any other considerations.

The orders in which levels are run is at the hosts discretion.

The maximum number of dog permitted for a judge per day is 30 or 6hrs of judging.

Spectators are permitted only by permission of the judge/host and competitor.

Running orders and trial information should be sent out to all competitors, and a briefing on the day with any additional instructions/rule changes/hazards.

Competitors will be informed when they can walk the search area.

**Judges**

Judges and hosts must be approved by the Scent Ops team.

There must be two judges from Gold level upwards, judges may have an assistant at any level if they choose.

Judges must consider the dogs competing and the safety of the search area.

Judges decision is final

When the handler calls Alert the judge is responsible for confirming whether the alert is correct or incorrect.

Indication The judged indication should be the indication the handler calls the alert on. It should be a non destructive indication and be clearly readable by the handler and judge. The handler must be able to identify the area of the hide from the indication given by the dog and the judge may ask for this conformation and mark accordingly. Proximity to source OR handler identification of source should be taken into account and score equally. Handlers will be marked on the timing of their reward/marking for indication.

If, in the opinion of the judge, a dog is unfit to trial, for health, welfare or behaviour issues, they can excuse them from the trial. This includes dogs out of control ANYWHERE at the trial, not just under competition.

Alert Confirmation for Accessible Hides. If the dog is near the source of the scent, but it is not clear to the judge that the dog has communicated the exact location to the handler, the judge should ask “where?” The handler must then indicate the source of the scent by pointing or gesturing. If the area that the handler indicates includes the hide location or the strongest concentration of odour in the judge’s expert opinion, the alert should be considered correct and the judge should respond in the affirmative.

Alert Confirmation for Inaccessible Hides. For inaccessible hides, the dog will not be able to pinpoint the exact location of the hide, so the judge will be looking for the dog to get as close as possible to the inaccessible hide location. If the dog is clearly indicating this area, the judge does not need to ask “where?” If the judge is not sure where the dog is indicating, the judge should ask “where?” If, in the judge’s expert opinion, the area that the handler indicates includes one or more of the locations where the dog would have encountered the escaping odour from the inaccessible hide, the alert should be considered correct and the judge should respond in the affirmative.

The judge may allow a dog handler team to repeat a search if, in the opinion of the judge, the team encountered extraordinary circumstances that were out of the control of the handler.

Residual and Lingering Odour. If search areas are reused during the course of the day, the judge must inform teams during the handler’s briefing (and may remind them on the start line) of the prior hide locations, to warn of possible residual or lingering odour. These areas must also be marked with stickers or tape, it is at the discretion of the handler if they choose to reward their dog in those areas but the time will not be stopped.

Hides may be cleaned and/or refreshed during the trial.

**Results**

The results of the trial must be published for all competitors to have access within 48hrs, and then be published publicly. This may be done via email, social media or website. This does not have to be the scores in their entirety but must include all places.

Handlers individual score sheets must be handed out at the end of the trial or a copy sent with in 48hrs.

It is the hosts responsibility to send in all results to the admin team within 7 days.

**Leagues**

**There is a Winter and Summer league. Summer runs from 1st March to 31st August 2024 and Winter 1st September 2024 to 28th Feb 2025. There will be winners rosettes and trophies for both.**

There are two leagues, the championship league and the diamond league.

All dogs from level 2 upwards will be entered into the Championship league.

The Diamond league is a ‘special’ league for dogs not in the Championship league.

This may be because they have a physical disability, the team drop down to lower levels due to dog age or a new handler taking on an experienced dog (such as a child handling their parents dog).

Teams must apply for the Diamond league.

The Diamond league will run at levels Bronze upwards, Diamond dogs may enter Club but no league points will be given.

Points are awarded for placings at both leagues:

1st 7 points

2nd 6 points

3rd 5 points

4th 4 points

5th 3 points

6th 2 points

Starting but un placed 1 point

If entries to a trial are limited to 6 or below then only half points will be awarded and this must be stated on the advert to competitors.