

**WEST AUSTRALIAN WORKING SHEEP DOG ASSOCIATION
RULES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON YARD & UTILITY TRIALS**

Updated June 2023

All official yard & utility trials are to be judged under WAWSDA Yard & Utility Rules and Recommendations.

1. DEFINITIONS.

- 1) **YARD DOG TRIAL:** A competition in which a dog and its handler must negotiate sheep through a predetermined course confined within a permanent or temporary sheep yard, within a specified time. Eighteen or more sheep should be used if possible.
- 2) **UTILITY TRIAL:** A competition in which a dog and its handler must negotiate sheep through both the yard and field courses, within a specified time.
- 3) **ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:** The persons responsible for conducting the competition.
- 4) **TRIAL COMMITTEE:** Three people as nominated on the program to settle any disputes and/or clarify any ruling.
- 5) **HANDLER:** Financial member of an affiliated club who has nominated to work a dog.
- 6) **FARMERS/ENCOURAGE CLASS:** When you first start trialing you are permitted five encourage runs. For Yard and Utility trials, encourage workers may enter encourage and novice events whilst they are still in the encourage class, a total of ten runs. They can choose to enter yard only or utility only or a combination of both, making a total of five. If an encourage worker enters an open event, they will lose their encourage status. Encourage workers are also permitted to run open dogs in their 10 encourage/novice event. Once the encourage status is completed, they can enter as many events as they like, but if they have an open dog, it will be relegated back to the open class only. If the worker wins a novice event, they will lose their encourage status.
- 7) **NOVICE YARD DOG:** One that has not won a novice yard trial, can enter in an improver yard trial only if registered with WAWSDA. (Ref 9)
- 8) **NOVICE UTILITY DOG:** One that has not won a novice or open utility trial.
- 9) **IMPROVER YARD DOG:** Has won a novice yard trial, can enter Improver/Open yard trial. Dog must be registered with WAWSDA.
- 10) **OPEN DOG:** Must be registered with WAWSDA.
- 11) If a dog wins the novice utility it automatically goes up a class to be an improver dog in the yard and an open in the utility.

2. TRIAL RULES.

- 1) Prior to the start of the competition a draw must be conducted to determine the order of working. Where a worker has more than one entry in a class, entries will be distributed as uniformly as possible throughout that class. The first and second runs in any class will be randomly selected from all dogs in that class. Any dog entered in a utility trial is automatically eligible for the yard section, unless the dog has previously won a yard trial. Any dog competing in an open trial must be entered with its full name and registration number.
- 2) All handlers must be issued with a copy of the draw, or a copy must be displayed in a prominent position at the trial. A public address system should be employed wherever possible to keep handlers and spectators informed.
- 3) Judges will be selected by the organizing committee from the list of Novice and Open judges. When using two judges the scores will be combined and averaged. Judges will address all competitors prior to the commencement of the trial. Before the trial, judges should observe sheep going through the course before addressing the competitors. The judge(s) will be in command of the competition from the time the handler, with dog released, enters the course.
- 4) All sheep will be inspected for any physical defects or injuries prior to being worked. Any injured, unhealthy or unsuitable sheep must not be worked (e.g., wool blind).
- 5) The organizing committee will set a maximum time in which the course must be completed, before the competition commences. The composition of the course will influence the time allowed; it is recommended the course be constructed to allow it to be comfortably completed within that time. A bell or similar device shall signify the start and end of each run.

- 6) All competitions are to be run over a course determined by the organizing committee. Competition courses should include at least four of the following:
 - Gather of sheep.
 - Drafting race/classing race.
 - Trailer, truck or elevated platform.
 - Ramp.
 - Fill a wool shed.
 - Put sheep away.
 - Any other obstacle likely to found in farm sheep yards.
- 7) When erecting the yards, the organizing committee must ensure there are no sharp edges, protrusions or objects that may be hazardous or likely to cause injury to the sheep, dogs or handlers. Where the yards are constructed from panels or portable yards, the organizing committee must ensure that they are securely fixed to prevent any movement when the sheep apply pressure.
- 8) In competition courses incorporating a drenching race or other confined area into which all the sheep must be forced, the number of sheep to be worked shall be that number which allows each sheep to stand comfortably. The organizing committee shall determine this number in consultation with the judge(s). Section points must be allocated to each section according to its degree of difficulty.

3. JUDGING SYSTEMS: YARD TRIAL OR YARD SECTION

- 1) The yard section will commence once the judge starts the trial (or when the sheep are within the yards in a utility trial).
- 2) No handling of the dog. Penalty Disqualification.
- 3) Dogs causing sheep to go down through over-working will be penalized at the judge's discretion.
- 4) Dogs shall not be penalized for nipping sheep low down on the hock or on the topknot, providing they do so in the right places at the right time, and without being too severe.
- 5) Dogs biting excessively and/or working the sheep in an unduly rough manner may be disqualified or penalized between two and five points, at the judge's discretion.
- 6) Opening of gates and mixing of sheep is to be done in the prescribed sequence. Penalty five points.
- 7) Each gate incorrectly left open. Penalty five points.
- 8) If the dog makes no valid attempt to move the sheep within a section, all points for that section are lost.
- 9) Dog turning sheep wrong way due to over heading. Penalty one point each time.
- 10) Dog leaving yard or race and needing to be called back. Penalty two points each time.
- 11) Any movement by worker to move sheep. Penalty two points.
- 12) Dog jumping in wrong pen. Penalty one point.
- 13) Sheep not clear of all gates before closing. Penalty four points.
- 14) In the drenching race, five sheep (the first two and last three) may be marked with raddle (subject to the owner's consent).
- 15) Points shall be deducted at judge's discretion for sheep breaking back (one point per panel, being harder on the dog that makes little attempt to cover). Dogs causing sheep to hit fences or gates. Penalty two to five points or disqualification.
- 16) If necessary, for opening, gates must be cleared of sheep by dog. Penalty four points.
- 17) Turn tail, not under pressure. Penalty two points.
- 18) Turn tail, under pressure. Penalty one point.
- 19) In the drafting phase, handlers may use their body to avoid jamming sheep's head. Mis-drafted sheep. Penalty two points each sheep.
- 20) If no forward progress is made, points should be deducted for ineffective work. Penalty one point. Once the dog has lost all points for a section, the handler will be told to assist the dog to clear that section.
- 21) Prior to competing, handlers may apply to the trial committee to have an able-bodied person assist with any physically demanding task likely to be encountered. The assistant must be selected by the trial committee and will assist at the direction of the handler. The handler will be penalized if the assistant infringes any rules.
- 22) Judges to nominate in their opening address in which yards dogs may not cross, penalty five points AND which areas are "off course" and which areas result in "lost sheep".
- 23) In the event of a run being interfered with e.g., gates not closed or dogs or sheep straying onto the course, the judge may order a rerun.

- 24) In the event of a sheep escaping but not from the entire course, the clock is stopped while the situation is rectified. Judges to point the "off designated course" at their discretion. If the situation cannot be remedied in approximately two minutes, the trial will be terminated.
- 25) Where the yard score is taken from a combined Yard and Utility event. If the competitor has a sheep escape from the yard section, their yard score will not be eligible for the yard competition but will be eligible for a utility score, once sheep has been put back on course.
- 26) Dogs may wear a muzzle. Penalty five points.

4. FIELD SECTION.

- 1) Points are allocated to each field section. The cast, draw and movement of sheep into the yards will be one section. When all points have been lost in any one section, the handler will be asked to move on to the next, until the course is completed, or time expires.
- 2) Handler may not leave the casting peg until sheep have entered the circle. Penalty section points.
- 3) Dog leaving prior to bell and not able to be recalled. Penalty disqualification.
- 4) Redirection during the cast. Penalty one point each redirection.
- 5) Crossing.
 - a) One cross on the cast. Penalty fifteen points. Second cross, loss of all points for that section.
 - b) At any time after the cast, crossing in the field section. Loss of all points for that section.
- 6) Stopping short or over running on the cast, thereby forcing the sheep offline. Penalty one point and then one point for every ten meters further offline.
- 7) Every ten meters the sheep go beyond, wide of or back from the circle, prior to entering the circle. Penalty one point.
- 8) Sheep must be kept within ten meters each side of the handler for the remainder of the field section. Penalty one point and another for every ten meters further.
- 9) Every worker must follow the set course, in the correct order.

10) Trap.

The trap is judged in two sections, making a total of fifteen points. Ten points for entering the trap, and five for releasing the sheep and shutting the gate.

If the sheep exit the pen whilst the handler is walking to the release gate, they may attempt to re-pen them whilst walking at normal pace to the release gate. If not successful they lose the five points.

10) Pen.

- (a) Handler not standing in the circle. Penalty all pen points.
- (b) Any sheep leaving the pen after the worker leaves the circle and returned immediately, before the worker closes the gate. Penalty one point. Any sheep escaping completely after the worker leaves the circle will result in the loss of all pen points and termination of the trial.

5. FINALS.

- 1) The finalists will be the highest scoring dogs in the first run. Number in the final to be determined by the trial committee.
- 2) If a number of dogs are tied on the lowest score eligible for the final, all will go into the final.
- 3) The highest aggregate score will be the winner.
- 4) In the event of a tie for first place after aggregation of scores, a runoff will be conducted. There must be an outright winner.
- 5) In the event of a tie for minor places prize money is pooled then divided e.g., if third place is a tie, prize money from third and fourth is pooled and divided. If there is a trophy, place getters may toss for it or have a runoff.
- 6) Where possible the final shall be conducted in the same order as the dogs were drawn in the first run. However, if a handler has consecutive runs, they may be separated by other finalists.
- 7) Club secretaries must work out the top twelve places for both yard & utility sections before forwarding the official program to the WAWSDA Secretary.

6. RE-RUNS.

- 1) A re-run will be granted if any dog not belonging to the handler comes into the competition area and interferes with the run.
- 2) The judge(s) may order a re-run for the competing dog at any time during that dog's run.
- 3) If a re-run is granted it must be conducted at the end of the draw.

7. PROTESTS.

Any protest must be lodged with the trial committee immediately and their ruling is final.

8. CANES.

Canes are not to be used in a threatening manner, penalized at the judge's discretion.

9. WELFARE OF SHEEP AND DOGS.

- 1) The handler will not be penalized for aiding a distressed sheep.
- 2) Handler must make an effort to stand a sheep that goes down in a race or other confined area and free a sheep caught in a fence. Failure to do this or showing disregard for the welfare of the sheep must be penalized or may result in disqualification.
- 3) All dogs worked should be vaccinated and in general good health.

10. GENERAL RULES.

- 1) A panel of senior judges appoints new Novice and Open judges.
- 2) The status of a dog in Yard and Utility trials is not affected by its status in Arena trials.
- 3) The two WA representatives to the Australian Yard Dog Championship will be:
 - 1) The winner of the State Yard Trial and
 - 2) Another from our "Yard Dog of the Year list" which is taken from the six trials prior to the closing date for the Championship.
- 4) The registrar for a fee of \$20.00 may register a dog scoring 75% of possible points or winning a novice yard or novice utility trial.

11. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

- 1) If personal gates are provided in a yard course, they must be used.
- 2) Stopping walking between obstacles in the field section. Penalty two points.
- 3) Scorecard should be varied to suit the trial.
- 4) Number of sheep used in the field section will depend on availability.
- 5) Bitches on heat may be worked at yard & utility trials.
- 6) Handlers entered in a combined yard & utility trial and who lose sheep or retire in the first part of the field section, are still eligible for a yard run.
- 7) Running by handlers should be eliminated in yard & utility trials. Penalized at the judge's discretion.
- 8) No abuse, physical or verbal e.g. "You mongrel" and "I'll get you". Penalized at the judge's discretion.
- 9) Secretary of the club running the trial to keep a set of rules in the office.
- 10) Yard Sub Committee to have the judges' panel meetings around the fire etc. Up and coming judges to practice by shadow judging with open judges.
- 11) Encourage workers to be accompanied by an experienced worker.
- 12) Points in "Dog of the Year" will be allocated to a "Dog and Handler" team.
- 13) Novice dogs representing the State will be upgraded to Open status.
- 14) Yard status and Utility status are separate as from April 2015 i.e., if a dog wins a novice yard it is still eligible to run in the novice utility and vice versa.