



Victorian Working Sheep Dog Association Inc.

Guidelines for Judging

Adopted 28 February 2010

Note: These are Guidelines only, not rules. They are intended to be an aid to judges and to bring some consistency to judging. All situations are different, and, as such, penalty points are suggestions only.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF JUDGES

- 1) Be well dressed and presented.
- 2) Inspect the course prior to the start each day.
- 3) Make sure that the obstacles are well secured for the safety of sheep, dog and worker.
- 4) Talk to the release team and the timekeeper so that they fully understand your wishes & signals.
- 5) Be thoroughly conversant with and abide by the *Trial Rules* and the *Guidelines for Judging* and always have a copy at hand.
- 6) Before making any allowance for the temperament of the sheep the judge must be sure that the dog played no part in any negative reaction of the sheep to the dog.
- 7) Familiarise yourself with the unit of 9 metres, practice estimating that distance and check your estimations before judging a trial.
- 8) The welfare of the sheep and dogs must be a judge's major consideration.

COMMAND

- 1) Before entering the trial ground the dog must be uncollared, unleashed and under verbal and/or signal control.
- 2) The trial should not commence until the worker is at the casting peg & the dog is within the command position. The distance of command at the casting peg shall be between 2 & 10 metres in an arena trial and between 2 & 20 metres in a field trial (*Trial Rule 18d*). If the dog is not in the command position it must be called into position before the trial may commence.
- 3) The judge signals for the release of the sheep and should wait until the sheep are approximately 20 metres clear of the perimeter fence and any fixed obstacle, in clear view of the competitor and are preferably stationary before signalling for the bell. (*Trial Rule 23*)

CAST (OUTRUN)

- 1) The cast should be marked out of 12.
- 2) If the dog commences its cast before the bell rings and is unable to be recalled, the penalty is disqualification. However, if the dog is able to be recalled without making contact with the sheep it is not disqualified and there is **no loss of points** as the trial has not officially commenced. If the dog has made any contact with the sheep it is disqualified.

- 3) The dog should run out freely, with purpose & no inclination to cross, preferably with a pear-shaped cast, looking for the sheep, to take up a position of command (i.e. where it can control the sheep whichever way they move). The worker may stay in touch with the dog on the outrun by whistle or voice. (The judge should decide if & how much contact he will allow on the cast and inform competitors of this prior to the commencement of the trial.)
- 4) The position of command will vary depending on whether the sheep are moving or stationary. If the sheep are moving, the dog should stop the sheep and then be able to move either way to lift the sheep to the worker without penalty. If the dog needs extra commands (whistle or voice) to find the position of command, there should be a **1 point** loss for every extra command.
- 5) If the sheep are moving and the dog fails to gain control of the sheep, then it should be pointed as for general work: **1 point for every 9 metres.** (more allowance for a field trial).
- 6) If the sheep tend towards the boundary after their release, which is unavoidable at times, the judge should make allowance for any difficulty the dog has in getting the sheep from the boundary as long as he is sure the situation has occurred through no fault of the dog.
- 7) If during the cast the dog is stopped, brought back and recast it loses the 12 points for the cast. If it is stopped and redirected: penalty **3 points**. Subsequent stop or redirection: **3 points**.
- 8) Pace/Width/Distance on cast - no penalty unless extreme. The pace the dog runs at for the cast may vary but the dog should show intent. If the dog allows or causes the sheep to deviate (by being too wide or too narrow) from the ideal course straight to the worker, then a **1-3 point loading** should apply on actual points lost.
- 9) Where the dog first stops is regarded as the completion of the cast. The position of the dog will prove correct if the lift commences in the appropriate manner and no points should be lost. If the dog stops short of 12 o'clock the judge has to decide if it stopped because it was too narrow and would have chased the sheep off course by going to 12 o'clock, or if where the dog stopped is in fact the point of balance.
- 10) Points are deducted as specified below. What the dog does after the completion of the cast is pointed as general work.
- 11) If the dog over-runs or stops short of taking up a position of command, points should be lost as follows:
 - 11-12 o'clock & 12-1 o'clock: 1-2 points
 - 10-11 o'clock & 1-2 o'clock: 2-3 points
 - 9-10 o'clock & 2-3 o'clock: 3-4 points
 - 6- 9 o'clock & 3-6 o'clock: 5-6 points
- 12) A dog crossing in the cast, or at any time, will be disqualified, with the exception of Farmers and Encourage trials where a dog is allowed 2 crosses (*Trial Rule 11*). In the absence of a penalty in Trial Rule 11, suggest **penalty of 10 points per cross**.
In A Novice trial a dog is allowed one (1) cross – **penalty 50 points** (*Trial Rule 29*).
- 13) If the dog casts outside the arena unnecessarily it should be disqualified. If, in the opinion of the judge, it was necessary for the dog to leave the arena any points deducted should be as per general work.

LIFT (APPROACH)

- 1) The lift is defined as taking control of the sheep at the completion of the cast and is the first movement of the sheep directly towards the worker, and should be marked out of 5.
- 2) After the dog has taken control of the sheep and the sheep make their first movement towards the worker the lift is completed and the draw commences. The dog should lift the sheep steadily and with purpose in a straight line to the worker.
- 3) The dog should be allowed time to assert its authority and take control of the sheep before being penalised.

DRAW (BRING)

- 1) What occurs after the completion of the cast and lift becomes the draw and is pointed as general work.
- 2) The sheep should be drawn in a straight line to the worker in a 9 metre corridor (20 metres for a field trial). Once the sheep leave this corridor the dog should take control of them again whereupon a new corridor in a straight line to the worker is formed.
- 3) For every 9 metres the sheep travel outside the corridor **1 point** is lost.
- 4) Some milling is allowed within the corridor – no penalty for this.
- 5) If the dog initially takes control of the sheep but then allows them to continually drift or deviate outside the corridor **a loading of 1-3 points** should apply on actual points lost. A similar penalty should be applied for each fresh corridor until the dog asserts its authority and takes control of the sheep.
- 6) The draw is completed when the sheep pass behind the worker in an anti-clockwise direction and past the point in line with the casting peg and the release (point of balance mark). When the first obstacle is on the worker's left hand side, the draw is completed when the sheep are taken to a position at an angle of 2 o'clock.
- 7) The sheep must be unwound if they pass over the point of balance mark behind the worker in a clockwise direction. The sheep only need to be unwound once, regardless of how many times they have gone the wrong way. If the sheep have to be unwound the penalty is for being off course.
- 8) If the worker leaves the casting peg before the sheep have passed the point of balance mark, the penalty should be a minimum of **3 points**, and the judge must recall the worker to the casting peg.

BETWEEN OBSTACLES

- 1) Between obstacles there is a 9 metre course - a corridor - on the worker's right hand side. The sheep should travel within this corridor and should be kept up with the worker. For every 9 metres the sheep travel outside this corridor, loss of **1 point**. For every 9 metres behind or in front of the worker, loss of **1 point**.
- 2) For maximum points sheep should travel in a forward direction, on course at all times. Milling should not incur a penalty, provided it is not excessive. Sheep turning back & covering ground they have already covered should be penalised **2 points for every 9 metres** or part thereof.
- 3) Should the sheep, through no fault of the dog, end up off course after negotiating an obstacle, there shall be no loss of points until the sheep are put directly back on course and the dog takes control of the sheep.
- 4) If a dog allows the sheep to continually drift or deviate outside the corridor a loading of **1-3 points** should apply on actual points lost until the dog asserts his authority and takes control of the sheep and puts them back on course.
- 5) If a dog causes or allows the sheep to go off course a loading of **2 points** should apply on actual points lost.
- 6) Walking between obstacles should be in a straight line with the sheep on the worker's right hand side. Points must be deducted if the worker stops and may be deducted if the worker walks backwards (*Trial Rule 26*).

OBSTACLES

- 1) If the worker leaves the worker's position at an obstacle before the sheep have completely cleared that obstacle, he must be disqualified.
- 2) If the sheep are in the race or bridge and the dog forces from outside the obstacle, there should be a penalty of **3-7 points**.

- 3) If the dog stops the sheep half-way through an obstacle, there should be a penalty of **3-7 points**.
- 4) The Judge at his discretion need not disqualify a dog getting between worker and sheep provided the dog is or has been forcing in a proper manner at and inside an obstacle. (Trial Rule 28)
- 5) With any obstacle there can be various situations where sheep split through and around the obstacle, etc., therefore the following point deductions are a guide only. The judge must always consider if the dog caused or allowed it to happen or not and penalise accordingly.

Gap

- 1) Once sheep go past line of gap, loss of **1 point**.
- 2) Past back of either hurdle, loss of **2 points**.
- 3) Past back of either hurdle and past gap, loss of **3 points**.
- 4) After that the general field rule of **1 point** per every 9 metres off course applies.

Race & Bridge

- 1) Once sheep go past front line of race or bridge, loss of **1 point**.
- 2) Past first wing of race or bridge, loss of **2 points**.
- 3) Past far end of race or bridge, loss of **3 points**.
- 4) After that the general field rule of **1 point** per every 9 metres off course applies.
- 5) If all sheep are within the wings, points should be deducted if one or more of the sheep escape: **1- 3 points** depending on severity.

Pen

- 1) Once sheep go past front line of pen, loss of **1 point**.
- 2) Halfway down side of pen, loss of **2 points**.
- 3) Past back of pen, loss of **3 points**.
- 4) After that the general field rule of **1 point** per every 9 metres off course applies.
- 5) The gate cannot be closed until all sheep are fully across the line of the gate. The judge should position himself to see this. If the worker leaves his position before the sheep are fully in the pen he is disqualified.
- 6) Once the worker leaves his position to shut the gate, if a sheep escapes from the pen the trial terminates and the worker forfeits points for the pen. (Trial Rule 31)
- 7) Points should be deducted for letting the sheep out of the pen, **1- 3 points** depending on severity.
- 8) The judge signals to the timekeeper once the gate is closed to indicate the completion of the trial.

GENERAL WORK

1) Common sense and fairness

Common sense and fairness should be the basis of every decision made by the judge.

2) Drifting

Drifting of sheep (i.e. keeping the dog off the sheep and making no effort to put them back on course) should be recognised and penalised appropriately as we are looking for a working dog rather than a drifting dog.

3) Running wide

Running wide (i.e. when the dog runs wide of the sheep and loses working contact with them) should also be recognised and penalised appropriately.

4) Influencing the sheep

If a competitor influences or blocks the flow of sheep, either by voice, altering pace, tripping, body positioning, hand signal, or by the use of a stick, there should be a penalty of at least **3 points**, and if this unfair manoeuvre results in his successfully negotiating an obstacle there should be a penalty of **at least 5 points**. However, when imposing such penalty the judge should be certain that the action is deliberate.

5) Dog biting

In self defence on head of sheep:	No penalty
Nipping	No penalty
Biting but not hanging on	2-5 points
Biting and hanging on:	Disqualification
Body biting:	Disqualification
Injuring a sheep	Disqualification

6) Force

Correct force is deemed to be the dog applying steady controlled pressure, mental and physical, towards the sheep. Excessive weaving to and fro can be a sign of lack of force. Anything less than steady controlled pressure should be penalised **1-5 points**.

7) Camping and lack of progress

Before penalizing for lack of progress judges must be sure that the competitor will be unable to pen the sheep in the allotted time, or that he is simply playing with the sheep and not letting them get off course in order to run the time out. Once it is determined that camping is occurring there should be a penalty of **2-3 points** per 30 seconds. Judges should be aware of time-wasting as a ploy in not losing any further points.

8) Barking

Barking is generally not necessary, is undesirable, and is not considered to be correct force. If used it should be for a purposeful and valid reason.

If it works	1-2 points per bark
If it doesn't work	3-5 points per bark

9) Turntails

Turntails should carry a **2 point** penalty, depending on the situation. The loopy, loss of interest type tailturn is generally a sign of weakness and should carry a penalty of **at least 4 points**.

10) Leaving the ground

If a dog leaves the arena for no obvious reason during a trial, the penalty should be disqualification.

11) Giving ground

If the sheep advance on the dog, the dog should be given the opportunity to halt that advance and return the sheep to where they came from without penalty. If the dog gives too much ground in achieving this, there should be a penalty of **1-5 points** depending on severity.

12) Chasing

Sheep should be worked by control, not by being chased. Dogs excessively chasing or overworking sheep should be encouraged to retire or be rung off.

13) Sticks

Sticks up to 60cm in length & brown in colour, solid and without flaps, are allowed. Any worker with a stick that does not comply should be asked to discard it, or otherwise be disqualified.

14) Right to terminate

The judge has the right to terminate a trial at any time due to inferior work.

15) Positioning

Judges should at all times during a trial take care to place themselves so that they do not influence the sheep or impede the dog but yet are in a position to assess the control the dog has on the sheep and that the sheep are on course.

16) Defective sheep

All competitors deserve the right to reasonably even sheep. Judges should insist that sheep are inspected daily (*Trial Rule 13*) and defective sheep are culled. Judges should not be afraid to grant re-runs to workers who receive clearly defective sheep (e.g. horns over eyes, lame, wool-blind, etc.). Any competitor has the right to appeal to the judge if he thinks the sheep are defective, but this must be done prior to the sheep rounding the casting peg. (*Trial Rule 37*). If approved, a re-run will be given, and any points already lost should not be considered.

Any re-run after this point will not be given if the worker has lost more points than will enable him to run in the final. (*Trial Rule 36*) Should a worker be granted a re-run which qualifies for a final, his place in the final should be in the same order as his qualifying run.

17) No obstacles achieved

If there are no obstacles negotiated in a trial, the competitor cannot gain a score greater than 25 points. (*Trial Rule 34a*)

CONCLUSION

To arrive at a decision to deduct points the judge should:

- 1) Leave room for the dog that does it correctly/perfectly.
- 2) Consider the qualities of a good working dog: heading ability, the ability to hold and balance sheep, the ability to work at the point of control without giving ground, steadiness, force, cover and eye.
- 3) Consider the way the dog works through the effect it has on the sheep. Quiet, confident sheep control is the ideal.
- 4) Consider what is in control – the dog or the sheep. This simple formula can apply to most judging decisions.