

National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)

Article / Evidence Search 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 article/evidence search incidents for articles with live human scent.
- 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. OBJECTIVE

- The Article Test demonstrates the ability of the team (handler/K-9) to locate a minimum number of live-scented articles within two (2) separate components (Wilderness Area and Roadway) within a prescribed time period.
- 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 final response.
- This test is designed to simulate an actual search and not team training. The handler will be asked to approach it as such.

3. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The field test shall only be given if all of the prerequisite paperwork has been presented and all testing fees have been paid.
- The handler shall be instructed to submit copies of prerequisite documents to the Evaluator via uploading to the website. Training logs are optional to be uploaded, and may be brought to the test for review.
- The Evaluator shall accompany the team on all testing elements and remain within normal speaking distance of the handler at all times during the evaluation so as not to interfere with the work of the handler/K-9 team.
- The handler shall mark the area of the K-9's final response within three (3) feet of the article, utilizing surveying flags or large washers with flagging tape attached.
- No electronic correction collars are permitted to be operational while the team is being evaluated. The K-9 may wear an electronic correction collar as long as the transmitter is turned off and given to the Evaluator until the test is completed.
- The K-9 does not demonstrate unwarranted aggressive behavior towards a person, other K-9s, livestock, or wildlife while outside of their primary enclosure.
- The K-9 has not been trained for / certified in Land Human Remains Detection.

4. TEST SITES

- A test site may be used twice within a 24-hour time frame if the same articles and placements are used. Otherwise, a site may only be used once in a 24-hour time frame.
- All articles will be placed at least thirty (30) minutes prior to starting the test, and in place no longer than two (2) hours.
- There shall be two (2) testing sites that have light to medium ground cover or trees. The boundaries of each search area shall be clearly marked. If a boundary is not easily found, the Evaluator may assist the handler in locating the boundary.

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- Wilderness Area. An area that is seventy-five (75) feet by seventy-five (75) feet or approximately 0.13 acres. There shall be two to six (2-6) live scented articles. The team shall be given no more than fifteen (15) minutes to search the area.
- Roadway. An area encompassing a road and the area adjacent to one side that is approximately one-hundred (100) feet long and sixty (60) feet in depth. The road should be navigable by an AWD or 4WD vehicle. There shall be one to three (1-3) live scented articles. The team shall be given no more than twenty-five (25) minutes to search the roadway.

5. ARTICLES

- Article scenting:
 - A subject who will not be in the search areas during testing shall be utilized for scenting of articles; the evaluator shall not scent articles for a test which they are evaluating.
 - All articles shall be live-scented by the subject for thirty (30) seconds each. Articles may be scented up to five (5) hours prior to testing, but once scented, must be placed in a new/clean zip lock bag and sealed. When they are placed for testing, the Evaluator must wear new/clean gloves so as not to transfer their odor to the article(s).
- Article types: Size shall be no smaller than a 22 caliber shell (0.22 x 0.6 inches) and not larger than a baseball bat (2 x 34 inches).
 - Metal (e.g., pocket knife, leatherman, coins, keys, watch)
 - Plastic (e.g., chapstick, ball-point pen, pill bottle, sunglasses, lighter)
 - Paper (e.g., notepad, envelope, cash)
 - Fabric (e.g., glove, handkerchief, sock, hat, sunglasses case)
 - Wood (e.g., hammer, icepick, baseball bat; *sticks are not permitted*)
 - An attempt shall be made to utilize multiple article types.
- Articles may be placed at surface level, elevated, or buried. All attempts shall be made to conceal or camouflage articles.
 - No more than one (1) article per site shall be elevated and placed no higher than three (3) feet above ground level.
 - No more than one (1) article shall be buried between both sites. Buried articles shall be no more than four (4) inches below ground cover (leaves, pine needles, debris); or no more than four (4) inches below surface level with loose (not packed) soil.
- The Evaluator shall make an effort to place articles a minimum of ten (10) feet apart. Articles shall not be placed inside buildings, vehicles, or containers.

6. FINAL RESPONSE PRE-TEST

- Before this test is taken, the team must demonstrate the K-9's "Final Response" behavior (the K-9's trained means of signaling to the handler that it has found the article and is a clear, distinct, readable action not regularly displayed). A pre-test is not required if this is an NSDA recertification, but can be administered at the Evaluators discretion.
- The K-9 shall be started sent a minimum of twenty-five (25) yards toward a specific hiding place to find a concealed article. The handler may only walk toward the article enough to guide the K-9 into a downwind position. The handler may not approach the article nor direct the K-9 to the article. The handler will not in

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any way cue the K-9's final response.

- The Final Response Pre-test should be given only once to the team and should be set up to be completed in less than five (5) minutes. In extenuating circumstances, it will be the Evaluator's decision to offer a re-test. If the pre-test is not passed, the team will not be allowed to take the Field Test.

7. EVALUATORS

- The evaluation shall be conducted by a designated NSDA Principal Evaluator, with the option of a second Evaluator, Apprentice Evaluator(s), or a Board-designated observer(s).
- The Evaluator(s) shall terminate the test if, in their opinion, it becomes hazardous to any of the participants.
- The Evaluator(s) shall have discretion in the administration and evaluation of all portions of the test as long as they are guided by the written standards.

8. DISTRACTIONS

- Another person and K-9 should pass through the area prior to testing as an obvious distractor. Distractor dogs are permitted to urinate and defecate in the area.
- Evaluators should make all efforts to find reasonably clean search areas. In the occurrence that a K-9 performs their trained response on any trash items not placed as part of the evaluation, the evaluator will immediately inform the handler and allow the team to continue the search without limitation.
- Natural distractors including, but not limited to, live/dead animals or uneaten foods, may be part of any of the test components. This simulates what handlers will have to deal with on actual searches. Should the handler call a final response or if the K-9 is unable to work past a natural distractor, the test shall be considered a failure. Evaluators shall not remove any natural distractors.

9. 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.
- Lack of adequate equipment by the handler may be a reason for the exam to be stopped and considered a failure. For example, if the handler runs out of water, the Evaluator may stop the test if there is a danger to the health or well-being of the handler and/or K-9.
- The use of GPS and/or GPS-technology by the handler is recommended; however, the use is not required.

10. KNOWLEDGE AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- Handler communicates to the Evaluator that they recognize when the K-9 has a change in behavior to live human odor.
- Handler demonstrates the ability to judge sweeps of areas as to their suitability to the prevailing

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conditions.

- Handler communicates to the Evaluator that they recognize when either member of the K-9 team is working ineffectively and takes action to compensate for or remedy the situation.

11. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

- The following requirements shall be successfully completed in order to pass this test.
 - The K-9 must search independently and perform a trained final response as described by the handler.
 - The K-9 must locate at least one (1) less article than the total number of articles placed in each search area within the allotted times for each component. If only one (1) article is placed, the K-9 must locate the singular article.
 - The handler flags the article location(s) within the allowable distance.
 - The K-9 did not disturb the article(s) or urinate/defecate within three (3) feet.
 - The handler demonstrates basic navigational skills and follows a search plan consistent with the conditions.
 - No false final response (a final response in the absence of a target) is given by the K-9 and called by the handler.
 - The handler has control of the K-9 during the testing period.
 - The team can effectively work accompanied by others.
 - The K-9 did not demonstrate unwarranted aggressive behavior towards a person or other K-9's while outside their primary enclosure.

12. BRIEFING OF HANDLER

- A briefing of the handler shall be held at the test site as close to the test time as possible.
- The Evaluator shall carefully explain each handler's test boundaries and point out the boundary markers.
- 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 have fifteen (15) minutes following the briefing to develop a search plan. The handler shall advise their Evaluator of the plan.

13. RE-TESTS

- One testing fee covers an initial test and a re-test if necessary in the same discipline, within one (1) year of the time of the test payment.
- A re-test consists of the entire test and not just the portion of the test that was failed.
- The Evaluator shall mark the scoring sheet in one (1) of three (3) ways concerning the re-test timeline:
 - “Immediately”
 - Must wait – “Three months” or “Six months”

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- 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.
- If an “Immediate” re-test is checked, then there may be another attempt:
 - of both (2) testing components.
 - of the one (1) testing component, whichever was failed.
- If an immediate re-test constitutes a testing of only one (1) of the two (2) components, then it must be done within the same testing event and must be done within a two (2) day period of time. If it cannot be done within two (2) days, the testing candidate shall have to re-test all components even though the score sheet shows an immediate re-test.
- 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. 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 but not refunded.
- If the team fails the re-test, the Evaluator shall mark on the scoring sheet that the team is not eligible to test again before a minimum of three (3) months.

14. RE-CERTIFICATION

- Re-Certification is required every two (2) years.