

Certification- who, what, where, when, why?

Why -To be honest, I do not know when AKC began requiring certification of a dog before it is entered in a Tracking Dog test. Maybe one of our members who recalls how it came to be will write in to the editor and explain how it began. I started Tracking in 1991 and it was required then. If you read the Tracking Regulations, certification is described in Chapter 3.

Who A provisional or approved Tracking judge can certify your dog. When you are quite certain your dog is ready (more on this later), you contact an AKC Tracking judge and make arrangements to meet for a certification track. Please ask what is the fee for the certification track. If the response is no fee, a small gift is appropriate. Cash is always appreciated and \$20.00 is about the right amount. So besides traveling to meet the judge, now you are in for \$20.00.

Where Sometimes an Obedience or Tracking Club will offer a Certification Day or Match. The group will have use of fields for the day and you make arrangements to be included as one of the dogs testing. If there is no certification day being offered or you cannot make it then, use the AKC website to look up a judge who is close to where you live. The e-mail and telephone numbers are listed for each judge so you can use that information to contact a judge to make arrangements for a certification. A judge usually has a location nearby that will be suitable for a certification track. Sometimes, less often now than in the past, there is room at a Tracking test location and one of the judges will be willing to have you meet them there for a certification. IF you want to do this, make certain it is acceptable to the club hosting the test.

When How do you know when your dog is ready? Below is a list of questions to ask yourself and help you to decide if your dog is ready.

Here are some things to consider:

Do you have a consistent start routine?

Does your dog have a motivated start? (Most tests at all levels are failed at the start and on the first leg)

Do you keep a steady line connection with your dog at 20 feet?

In practice, do you know exactly where your track goes and do you make maps?

Do you keep a tracking log?

Does your dog deep scent on the tracklayer's track?

Can your dog deal with distractions? (deer carcass, the gallery, moving cars, barking dogs)

Do you track consistently? (1-2 times/week?)

Do you track in all kinds of weather?

Do you track at all different times of day?

Can your dog problem solve turns?

Can your dog successfully complete a course of 3-5 turns, 440-500 yards, aged ½-2 hours?

Can **you** run a blind track?

Does your dog have a reliable article indication?

If you believe you and your dog are ready, by all means contact a judge to be certified. If your dog does not pass the certification track, do not panic, all is not lost. Any dog can have a bad day on the track. Typically the judge will offer some advice on what they observed by you and your dog on the track.

What to expect. A regulation TD track will be laid and aged for you. You and the dog will be judged as though it were a test. All the elements of a TD track will be included. If you pass the judge will provide the certification slips for you.