

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group Trailing Dog Standards

Version 1.0 6/16/2015

1) Purpose, Background, Scope

a) Purpose

These credentialing standards serve the following purposes:

- i) They allow AMRG to field scent-discriminating dog-and-handler Trailing Dog Teams that meet NIMS Type I, II, or III Trailing categorization (FEMA 8-508-1014).
- ii) They provide assurance to Responsible Agencies. (RAs)/Agencies Having Jurisdiction (AHJs), and to other SAR teams, that AMRG Trailing Dog Teams are trained and credentialed to high standards above the FEMA typing.
- iii) Their format provides a model for revising other AMRG dog standards.
- iv) They provide a model for potential future Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) Trailing Dog Team standards.

b) Background

- i) AMRG (and the ASRC), with rare exceptions, expect all members to be trained to at least the Field Team Member (FTM) level. Dog handlers, who must function as the leader of a team, must be trained to the Field Team Leader (FTL) level. Since search and rescue includes rescue as well as search, we expect the leader of any team, whether with a dog or not, to be able to handle field leadership roles for both search *and* rescue, including (human) first aid or medical care.
- ii) As with other AMRG and Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) training standards, these significantly exceed the FEMA typing, and include specific additions for the geography in the mid-Appalachian region, and for the roles of AMRG and ASRC as elite search and rescue organizations.

c) Scope

- i) Nothing in this document should be construed as contradicting or superseding ASTM F1847-14 *Standard Guide for Minimum Training of Search Dog Crews or Teams*, ASTM F1879 - 98(2014) *Standard Guide for Demonstrating Obedience and Agility in Search and Rescue Dogs* or ASTM F1848-14 *Standard Classification System for*

Canine Search Resources regarding SAR dogs and handlers.

- ii) Nothing in these standards should be construed as repudiating Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, ASRC, and other relevant standards for fielding as trailing dog resources, except where the following standards set higher or additional operational requirements consistent with the specific Type of dog team.
- iii) Dog team credentials issued by AMRG do not constitute a license to practice skills, but signify only that the individual holding the credential has met an established standard of knowledge and performance and may be expected to function at the level indicated.
- iv) Trailing Dog Team Type I, II, or III credentials are contingent on maintaining good standing in AMRG. A credential may be suspended or revoked by AMRG, consistent with the section 2.9 of the AMRG Administrative Policies and Standard Operational Guidelines.

2) Credentialing Process

a) Position Task Book (PTB)

All candidate Trailing Dog Teams shall maintain a Position Task Book (PTB) or check-off sheet specific to Trailing Dog Teams.¹

- i) The Position Task Book (PTB) lists the competencies, behaviors, and tasks required for successful performance as a Trailing Dog Team.
- ii) The PTB provides a standard form for documenting the knowledge, skills, and abilities the Trailing Dog Team by observation of that Trailing Dog Team's performance of tasks required for AMRG credentialing. When the Trailing Dog Team has successfully completed all the tasks in the PTB, the evaluated Trailing Dog Team is considered qualified and an Operational AMRG Trailing Dog Team.
- iii) PTB is now the accepted term for what AMRG and many other SAR Groups have termed "checkoff sheets." When used herein, the term "checkoffs" refers to a portion of the PTB. Once all of the checkoffs in the PTB are signed, the Trailing Dog Team meets the requirements for credentialing.
- iv) The PTB is an official record of completion of all items required for credentialing. Each item requires a date and an approved signature. All items must be completed for a Trailing Dog Team to be credentialed.
- v) From time to time, the Canine Officer will enter completed items from a candidate team's PTB into the Group's electronic training records. The electronic training record also is an official record of completion, and in the event a printed PTB is lost or destroyed, is acceptable evidence of completion.

b) PTB Checkoff Qualified Evaluators

- i) **Equipment Checkoffs** may be signed off by any AMRG-credentialed dog handler of Type III, II or I in any canine specialty.
- ii) **Knowledge (Cognitive) Checkoffs** may be signed off by any AMRG-credentialed canine handler of Type III, II or I in any canine specialty. For an item to be signed off, the candidate must present not just rote repetition but evidence of mastery of

the material.

- iii) **Skills (Psychomotor) Checkoffs** may be signed off by any AMRG-credentialed canine handler of Type III, II or I in any canine specialty. For an item to be signed off, the candidate must show the ability to complete the task efficiently and effectively.
- iv) **Certifications** (any required external certification, and the final entry in the PTB, indicating the PTB is completed and the Trailing Dog Team is now AMRG-credentialed) may only be signed off by the Canine Officer. The Canine Officer is responsible for uploading any required third-party certificates or other documentation into the Group's electronic training records.
- v) **Group Membership Vote** at a regularly scheduled business meeting is required after all other requirements are met, for final confirmation of the certification.

¹ This terminology is consistent with ASTM F3068 – 14: Standard Guide for Contents and Use of a Position Task Book (PTB). The PTB shall be compliant with the provisions of this ASTM standard.

c) External Certifications²

i) Obedience

A candidate dog shall hold a current certification demonstrating minimum obedience and proper behavior, for example an AKC K9 Good Citizen certification; other certifications or credentials may be accepted as equivalent by a simple majority vote of the AMRG Board of Directors.

ii) First Aid

A candidate dog handler shall have successfully completed an hour-length or longer certified course in canine or pet first aid, such as the Red Cross Pet First Aid course; other courses may be accepted as equivalent by a simple majority vote of the AMRG Board of Directors.

iii) FTL

A candidate dog handler shall be credentialed as an AMRG (and thus ASRC) Field Team Leader (FTL) for Trailing Dog Team Types I, II and III, including FTL equipment requirements.

iv) External Canine Certification

The dog and handler must be externally certified to the equivalent wilderness scent-discriminating trailing NIMS Type or higher. Certification from any of the following NIMS-compliant authorities is acceptable. The handler is responsible for renewing this external certification as needed. This list may be modified by the AMRG Board of Directors as needed.

- (1) Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC)
- (2) National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR)
- (3) United States Mantrailing Association (USMA)
- (4) American Working Dog Association (AWDA)
- (5) International Police Work Dog Association (IPWDA)
- (6) North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA)
- (7) National Search Dog Alliance (NSDA)

Should the entity granting the external trailing certification require a different time

period for recertification, Candidate must re-test at that time period or at the three-year period described above, whichever is shorter.

² Trailing Dog Team Type III is not a prerequisite for Trailing Dog Team Type II; and Trailing Dog Team Type II is not a prerequisite for Trailing Dog Team Type I.

d) Equipment

Candidate handlers shall demonstrate that their SAR packs also contain the following.

- i) One 6' leash or longer leash that can be shortened to 6'.³ Flexi-leads and other reeled and similar leashes are not suitable.⁴
- ii) One long-line leash at least 10' long.⁵
- iii) One extra 1-liter or larger water bottle over and above equipment requirements for FTL,
- iv) dog food sufficient to feed the dog for 24 hours,
- v) sufficient vet wrap, Ace bandage, or similar product to make a temporary muzzle for an injured dog, and
- vi) if part of the dog's reward, toys or treats.

³ This is for controlling the dog in hazardous situations.

⁴ Reeled leashes are considered unsafe in general, as they tend to malfunction, the cord tends to break, tends to tangle, and is a risk to others in the team. It also decreases communication between dog and handler. See

<http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2014/06/11/retractable-dog-leash.aspx>.

⁵ The long line is frequently used for working a trailing dog and is usually 10 to 30 feet long (length is by handler preference). It can also serve as a tie-out for other dogs. A length of webbing (such as required for FTL) or appropriate-diameter accessory cord will serve, providing the handler is willing to use it in this way.

3) Knowledge (Cognitive) Checkoffs

a) Canine Search Operations

- i) Describe how weather affects movement of airscent as reflected in current meteorological science.
- ii) Describe the differences in training and operations of airscent and trailing or other ground-scent dogs, and how those differences affect their appropriate deployment.
- iii) Explain how different times of day and weather patterns affect optimal tactics for approaching trailing tasks.
- iv) List three examples of characteristics of a good scent article.
- v) List three examples of characteristics of a bad scent article.
- vi) Describe the effects on deposition and location of ground scent of:
 - (1) weather,
 - (2) topography,
 - (3) time of day,
 - (4) season,
 - (5) age of scent, and
 - (6) the topography and vegetation of the central Appalachian area.

b) Wilderness Survival

- i) Describe how the presence of a canine partner affects survival situations in the wilderness.
- ii) Describe how canine physiology and physiognomy affects their risk of heat- and cold-related environmental illness differently than humans, and how a handler can prevent or treat these conditions in their canine partners.
- iii) Discuss average daily food and water requirements for dogs, including the effects of size of dog, level of activity, and weather

c) Canine Behavior

- i) Explain dominance and aggression in dogs, and how aggression toward other dogs and humans can be avoided and addressed.
- ii) Explain the value of motivation and reward in shaping canine behavior, and give examples of common positive reinforcers (rewards).

d) Canine First Aid and Rescue

- i) Describe improvised methods for evacuating of an injured dog to the trailhead.

4) Skills (Psychomotor) Checkoffs

a) Definitions

- i) Turn, as used in this section, shall refer to a sudden change in direction, approximating 90°.
- ii) Backtracking, as used in this section, is where the subject moves backwards along his or her prior line of travel.
- iii) A loop, as used in this section, is where the subject's scent trail loops around in a circle.
- iv) A crosstrack, as used in this section, is when a decoy human's scent trails crosses the subject's scent trail.

b) Survival and Wilderness Travel

Demonstrate the ability to bivouac in winter weather conditions, with canine partner and without significantly affecting functional ability, using only the equipment carried during operational testing as described below.

c) Canine First Aid and Rescue

- i) Demonstrate the following (simulated) first-aid scenarios on the canine partner:
 - (1) splinting a fractured leg, including muzzling the dog beforehand,
 - (2) removing a tick,
 - (3) stopping/dressing moderate bleeding, including muzzling the dog beforehand, and
 - (4) CPR.

d) Scent Collection

Collect, label, handle and preserve a scent article in accordance with commonly-accepted procedures.

e) Conditions for Field Search Task Checkoffs

- i) For each of the tasks listed below, the time allowed, distance and age of scent shall be as follows:
 - (1) **Type III evaluation:**
 - (a) Time: 1.5 hours
 - (b) Scent: aged 4-12 hours
 - (c) Distance: 1-2 miles
 - (2) **Type II evaluation:**
 - (a) Time: 1.5 hours including breaks
 - (b) Scent aged 12-24 hours
 - (c) Distance: 1-2 miles
 - (3) **Type I evaluation:**
 - (a) Time 1.5 hours (including breaks)
 - (b) Scent: aged 24-28 hours
 - (c) Distance: 1-2 miles
- ii) Prior to the start of the task, the handler shall inform the evaluator of:
 - (1) the dog's behavior when it does not detect the specific scent,

- (2) the dog's behavior when it does detect the specific scent and is trailing,
- (3) the dog's behavior when it detects a clue, and
- (4) the dog's behavior when it detects the subject.

- iii) Should a handler visually locate the subject prior to the dog's indication, the handler must tell the evaluator that the handler has visually located the subject. The candidate team shall then continue trailing until the dog makes an indication on the subject.

The handler shall describe to the evaluator what the dog is doing from the point of visually locating the subject until such time as the dog has made a find, based on earlier information on the dog's alert response. If, in the best judgment of the evaluator that the handler or a flanker has led or is leading the dog to the subject, the evaluator shall consider this a failure.

- iv) Evaluators should stop a task if they feel that the handler or dog are in danger.
- v) Upon making a find, the handler shall make a verbal or written summary of the task, as would be expected for an actual field task, including marking the location on a topographic map and providing UTM (or, if necessary for non-UTM maps, ASRC Grid System) coordinates for the find.

- f) Evaluator Guidelines: evaluators shall judge performance based on the following criteria, and provide feedback to handlers on their performance based on these criteria. Those with an asterisk (*) are critical, and a failure of one of these tasks should result in a fail for the task.

- i) The handler selects appropriate clothing and equipment for the task.
- ii) Prior to the task, the handler provides a verbal description of dog's alert behavior that is subsequently confirmed during the task. The handler can confidently interpret dog's behavior during the task.
- iii) * The handler keeps the dog under control.
- iv) * The handler is aware of the dog's condition and needs.
- v) * The handler can keep track of the team's position on the map, can correctly locate on the map the position of the find and any clues, and can report accurate grid coordinates via radio.

- vi) * The dog alerts on the proper subject, in a self-directed manner, with the behavior initially described by the handler, within the allotted time.
 - vii) The dog alerts on any clues with the behavior initially described by the handler.
 - viii) * The dog does not deviate more than 100m (~100 yards) from the trail.
 - ix) * No false alerts by dog or false calls by handler.
- g) Basic Daylight Task**
- i) In daylight, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) The trail shall have at least five but no more than seven turns.
 - iii) The area shall not be familiar to the handler.
- h) Basic Night Task**
- i) At night, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) The trail shall have at least three but no more than five turns.
 - iii) The subject shall be within 10 meters of a 0.5- to 1-mile linear feature such as a trail, ridgetop or creek.
 - iv) The area shall not be familiar to the handler.
- i) Night Task with Backtracking**
- i) At night, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) The trail that shall have at least three but no more than five turns.
 - iii) The trail shall include backtracking and loops.
- j) Daylight Task with Decoys and Crosstracks**
- i) In daylight, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) Two additional humans shall be at the end of the trail, and shall have walked roughly parallel to at least part of the subject's scent trail, but not necessarily at the same time.
 - iii) The canine must identify the subject correctly from within the group of three humans.
 - iv) The trail shall include at least three but no more than five crosstracks.
- k) Daylight Task with Structure and Paved Road**
- i) In daylight, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) The trail shall have at least five but no more than seven turns.
- iii) The trail shall involve at least one trail or woods road, and one paved road, as well as cross country travel.
 - iv) The subject placed in a structure such as a car, building or barn.
- l) Daylight Task with Difficult Terrain**
- i) In daylight, locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) The trail shall have at least five but no more than seven turns.
 - iii) The terrain is to include steep or irregular slopes, as in strip mine piling areas.
 - iv) The flora should also at least in part include large areas of brush such as multiflora rose and other "jagger bushes," and tough-limbed brush such as mountain laurel and rhododendron.
 - v) No ropework or rock climbing shall be necessary to search the area.
- m) Daylight Negative Task**
- i) In daylight, attempt to locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - ii) There shall be no scent trail in the starting area.
 - iii) The dog shall recognize the lack of a scent trail, and the handler shall recognize the dog's reaction to the lack of a scent trail, and without prompting, report the lack of a scent trail.
 - iv) After being given a direction in which to travel and traveling in that direction to where the subject's scent trail is present, the dog shall recognize the scent trail, and the handler shall recognize the dog's reaction to the presence of a scent trail, and without prompting, report the presence of a scent trail.
 - v) After the evaluator confirms there is no scent trail, the dog shall be placed inside of their vehicle for a 10 minute period.
 - vi) The dog shall then be brought back out to a different area to locate a subject by performing a trailing search.
 - vii) The trail shall be 0.5 mile in length, with two turns.⁶

⁶ Having a short, positive trail at the end is not only for training purposes to end on a positive note, but also to see the dog will not shut down after being put away from a negative.

5) Final Practical Examination Procedure

a) Test Structure

- i) The Canine Officer or Assistant Canine Officer shall supervise all practical examinations.
- ii) The Canine Officer or Assistant Canine Officer shall select a series of three trailing tasks, taken from the Skills (Psychomotor) Checkoffs. The candidate handler shall not be briefed as to which tasks have been chosen.
- iii) Two of these tasks may be abbreviated in time and distance, however one must extend the full length of time and distance specified for the Type.
- iv) Individual practical examination tasks may be evaluated and signed off only by the Canine Officer or an AMRG Trailing Dog Team handler credentialed to the Type for which the candidate is testing, or higher. However, if an appropriately-credentialed AMRG Trailing Dog Team handler is not available, the Bootstrap Mechanism may be used (see below).

b) Bootstrap Mechanism

If an appropriately-credentialed AMRG Trailing Dog Team handler and the Canine Officer is not available, or if the Canine Officer is the member being tested AND there is no other AMRG Trailing Dog Team Handler available, the following procedure shall be used:

- i) The Commander shall appoint an evaluation committee of three people, selecting from the following individuals, in order. In the event that an individual holds more than one of the positions in the list, an alternate shall be selected using the ordering of the list.
 - (1) the applicant dog handler,
 - (2) the Canine Officer,
 - (3) the Commander
 - (4) the Group Training Officer,
 - (5) The Operations Officer, if certified to the level of FTL or higher
 - (6) an AMRG-credentialed dog handler of another speciality, and
 - (7) a member of the AMRG Board of Directors, certified to the level of FTL or higher.
- ii) The evaluation committee shall jointly select an evaluator using the following criteria:
 - (1) The evaluator shall be a canine handler

in the same speciality as that which the applicants seek operational status.

- (2) The evaluator shall be of good repute.
 - (3) The evaluator shall be credentialed as a Trailing Dog Team to a minimum of NIMS type III Trailing by one of the organizations listed in External Certifications, above, or as an Evaluator for one of organizations listed in External Certifications, above.
- iii) The evaluator shall evaluate the candidate Trailing Dog Team using the Practical Examination process described above. The evaluator shall then determine whether the candidate Trailing Dog Team passes or fails. If the candidate passes, the evaluator shall sign the candidate's Position Task Book in the appropriate place. If the candidate fails, the evaluator shall inform the Canine Officer and candidate, and file a written report with the Canine Officer. Regardless of passing or failing the candidate, the evaluator shall provide recommendations for how the candidate team can improve its trailing performance.

6) Recredentialing

a) Duration

An AMRG Trailing Dog Team credential is valid for three years, and expires at the end of the month 36 months from the month of the initial credentialing.

b) Testing

The Trailing Dog Team must complete standard written and practical testing as for a new credential.

c) External Certification

A Trailing Dog Team that has let its external certification lapse is not eligible to re-credential with AMRG.

d) Knowledge (Cognitive) and Skills (Psychomotor) Checkoffs

The candidate Trailing Dog Team must demonstrate understanding of any new material added to the standards since the team's prior credentialing to the satisfaction of the Canine Officer.

a) Responsibility

The handler is responsible for making individual arrangements for recertification testing.

b) New Dog

Certification of a handler with a new dog is not a recertification, but a new certification.

c) Continuing Education ("Con-Ed")

A Trailing Dog Team applying for recertification must meet or exceed the following continuing education requirements.

- i) The handler must present the Trailing Dog Team's canine training logbook

documenting a minimum of 72 trailing search tasks over a three-year period (including actual missions, full-scale simulations, or regular training sessions).

- (1) More than one task may be counted from a single training session, simulation or mission.
 - (2) At least 20 tasks must be completed within each of the three 12-month periods preceding re-credentialing.
- ii) Shifts as Canine Liaison Officer in Base Camp may be equated to tasks by this formula: each 4 hours as Canine Liaison Officer shall be counted as one task. Periods less than 4 hours do not equate to a task.
 - iii) Of the 72 required triennial tasks, nine must be on full-scale exercises or missions.
 - iv) Training session tasks may be signed off by AMRG's Canine Officer, Assistant Canine Officer, the Group Training Officer, the Commander, or the designated leader of an AMRG training session.
 - v) Mission and full-scale exercise tasks, and shifts as Canine Liaison Officer may be documented by TAFs, other mission records or sign-in sheets signed off by Mission Operations Chiefs or Managers, and attestations by Mission Operations Chiefs or Managers. A Trailing Dog Team that fails any portion of the re-credentialing process loses operational status.