

# **ASCA TRIALING GUIDELINES**

**Revised 1997**

**IDEAL STOCK DOG:** The purpose of a stockdog is to take the place of a person's work, accomplishing what is needed without damage, undue stress, or danger to the stock. The proper frame of reference for judges and exhibitors evaluating the dog's work should be "what is best for the stock."

The ideal herding dog is one that can handle the stock in the best and most efficient way for that particular stock while working in harmony with the handler. To minimize stress and weight loss, the best pace for stock is a walk or jog; therefore, the ideal dog will adjust his pace to the stock and not push them unduly. It is understood that sometimes stock will run upon finding themselves loose in an arena with a dog. The dog must then work to establish control to get and keep the stock bunched. When control is established, the dog should back off and give the stock a chance to slow their pace. Dogs that charge, chase, stampede, and continually split the stock are to be excused.

The ideal dog is alert to every move of the stock but is responsive to the handler's commands. He should display a natural concern for keeping the stock together and, therefore, will remain in contact with the stock at all times. Being in contact with the stock does not necessarily mean gripping. The dog will show a calm self-confidence, and the ability to employ an appropriate amount of force for each situation, such as gripping heads or heels, when necessary.

## **TRIAL DIVISIONS**

**DIVISION GUIDELINES:** Below are general guidelines of what is expected of Started, Open, Advanced and Post Advanced dogs. Keep in mind that the stock will play a major role in the smoothness of the run. The more difficult the stock, the rougher the run may look.

**STARTED DOGS:** These started dogs have had little or no trial experience but should have control over their stock and be under control by the handler. The Started dogs should have the beginning of side commands, a walk on, and a stop. This division is not intended for testing a dog's instinct. Dogs entered in this division with little or no control do great harm to themselves, the stock, and to those who have to work after them and try to gain control over stressed stock. Handler lines were added to the program to show both fetch and driving work by the dog. The started dogs do not have a handlers line. Therefore, the started dog is allowed to work the course in whatever way is advantageous for the dog and handler. They may either drive or fetch the course (or a combination of both), with no point losses as long as the dog is in control of the stock and under control of the handler.

**OPEN DOGS:** These dogs should be able to control and rate their stock. The commands for left, right, slow down, and stop should be solid. These dogs should have a parallel drive, the start of a drive, and a good fetch. Response to commands should be smooth, and the dog should be working at a greater distance from the handler.

ADVANCED DOGS: The Advanced dogs should be able to work efficiently at any distance from the handler. The handler and dog should be exhibiting good team work with the dog showing proper responses to commands and the handler allowing the dog to take the initiative to think on its own. These dogs should have a cross-drive, drive, and take any necessary commands to get the job done. These dogs should be able to handle all types of stock from light to heavy with maximum control and minimum stress.

POST ADVANCED DOGS: The Post Advanced dogs should be able to work efficiently at any distance from the handler without the aid of a fence line. These dogs should be able to handle all types of stock from light to heavy with maximum control and minimum stress.

JUNIOR HANDLER: This class is for Juniors up through 17 years of age using any dog from an untried dog to a Working Trial Champion (WTCH). The handler is judged on his/her ability to control the dog, course knowledge, ability to read livestock, dog and handler team work, and attitude. Ring side coaching is allowed, but points will be deducted.

NOVICE HANDLER: This class is for adults over 17 years of age using any dog from an untried dog to a Working Trial Champion (WTCH). The handler is judged on his/her ability to control the dog, course knowledge, ability to read livestock, dog and handler team work, and attitude. Ring side coaching is allowed, but points will be deducted.

### TRIAL CLASSES

**CATTLE:** The ideal cattle dog works closer to the cattle using wear, correct positioning, power, and grip to keep them grouped and moving. More power (not to be mistaken for unnecessary gripping) is usually needed to move or stop cattle. Cattle should not be run through the course, but neither should they be allowed to drift at their leisure by a dog out of contact due to lack of power.

**SHEEP:** The ideal sheep dog should work sheep cautiously and with as little physical contact as is necessary. The degree of lightness of the sheep will determine how far off the dog should be working. The lighter the sheep, the further off the dog should be; the stickier the sheep, the closer the dog will have to work. With sticky sheep, a grip on the heels may be necessary. If a dog encounters fighting sheep which do not yield when the dog stands his ground, then a head grip may be justified. In most cases body biting or wool pulling are unnecessary and can result in time being called on the contestant.

**DUCKS:** The ideal duck dog works well back off the ducks and moves them slowly and smoothly. Gripping, running over, or pouncing on ducks is unnecessary and is grounds for excuse. Nudging a duck with the nose is acceptable in a case where the duck refuses to move for the dog.

**SCORE SHEET INSTRUCTIONS:** The scoring is broken into two sections. The first section is the "Course Score". The dog gets credit for each head of stock he puts through each obstacle regardless of how the dog does it, as long as the dog does the work. The second section is the "Dogs Ability to Control Livestock". This score is for how the work was accomplished.

For the Course Score, the stock must complete each obstacle as the result of the dog. The obstacles are scored on the first successful completion with no further course score given for subsequent completions of the same obstacle. The course must be attempted and/or completed in the proper sequence.

**Attempts:** A maximum of two attempts is allowed at each obstacle in Course A or Course B. The handler may move on to the next obstacle after one attempt. It is up to each Judge to determine if part of the work a dog does near an obstacle is to be counted as an attempt at that obstacle. When the Judge has determined that two attempts have been made, he will inform the handler of such and the handler must then move on to the next obstacle. An attempt may be counted when the dog is working and the stock just slip by the obstacle, when the stock get past 1/2 the arena and run back to the repen end, or if the stock have gone up the wrong side of the arena twice.

In the following situations the Judge must inform the handler of his decision or judgment call:

- a. A handler considers his first effort toward an obstacle an attempt and moves on. If the Judge does not feel that an attempt has been made, he must advise the handler immediately.
- b. The handler has not moved on after two attempts. The Judge must inform the handler he feels two attempts have been made and the handler should move on to the next obstacle. The two attempts would be either; 1) the dog had twice moved the stock near the obstacle, or 2) two or more head of stock crossed a "runaway line" two different times.
- c. After a reasonable length of time with no progress being made toward an obstacle, the Judge must advise the handler to move to the next obstacle.

**Runaway Lines:** The runaway line for obstacles 1 and 2 will be the Advanced Handlers line and for the center obstacle it will be the back fence at the repen end of the arena. Each time two or more head of stock break back over a runaway line, it is considered an attempt for the obstacle being attempted. If two or more head break to the back fence twice while working for the center obstacle, the attempt is over and the dogs must move on to the repen.

**Scoring "Dogs Ability to Control Livestock** ("Control"). Each section of the run will be scored for the manner in which a dog controls his stock, in that section. "Control" points MUST be given for all portions of the course the dog accomplished and/or attempted. "Control" points will be given on how the work was accomplished. This includes natural instinct for the breed, savvy, training, concentration, interest, power, and handling. Judges are expected to judge all types of herding breeds. Judges need to be aware of the difference in working style between the

breeds and judge accordingly, not comparatively. In order for an appropriate control score to be given, NATURAL INSTINCT must be shown. A mechanical dog who successfully completes the course strictly due to training should not be given a higher score due to training alone, when giving a control score.

The dogs ability to control livestock is basically up to the Judge's discretion as to what he expects from a dog. The above description under "Dogs Ability to Control Livestock" is a general one as this section reflects the Judge's opinion, but this description may help the handlers understand what is expected of them.

**COURSE GUIDELINES:** These guidelines were made with the ideal run of the Advanced dog in mind with absolutely no consideration given to the degree of difficulty of the stock. Obviously, the judge will have to modify his expectations of the Started and Open dogs and take the nature of the stock into consideration.

**TAKE PEN:** Scoring begins from when the handler opens the gate and ends when the stock successfully clear the opening of the take pen. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) the dog brings out the first time. If the handler takes the stock out of the pen without the dog, no course points will be earned. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished. The handler may enter the take pen with the dog and still earn Course Points. If while doing the take pen the stock bolt out of the pen through no fault of the dog, the handler may position the dog in the arena to take control of the stock as they run out of the pen with no point losses, either course or control points.

Taking stock out of the take pen should be smooth and easy with the dog going to the fenceline to allow the stock maximum opportunity to find the opening. The dog should have a confident approach to the stock and exhibit an awareness of the task of bringing the entire herd out the gate. Control points may be lost for: dog holding the stock in the take pen, busting through the middle before bringing them out, or bringing the stock out a few at a time rather than all at the same time. A smooth take pen done with the handler outside of the pen should be given more control points than one where the handler goes into the pen with the dog.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 15**

**DRIVE/FETCH THROUGH OBSTACLE 1:** Scoring begins at the completion of the take pen and ends when the stock exit the first obstacle or after two attempts have been made. Course A, a counter-clockwise course, requires a right hand drive/fetch; therefore, stock should be moved towards obstacle 1 on the right side of the center chute. If the stock are driven/fetched down the left side, Control points may be lost. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) that complete the drive/fetch and obstacle 1. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

The dog may either start the drive/fetch immediately after taking the stock from the take pen or may hold up the stock while the handler closes the gate and then start the drive/fetch. The drive/fetch should show control by the dog over the stock as the dog takes the stock directly from the pen to obstacle 1. The dog's awareness of the entire herd and its ability to control the stock when deviating from this pattern is essential. Appropriate force should be used to keep the stock moving in the proper direction. The dog's ability to turn back animals breaking away and keep his

herd together at the beginning of his run is important.

The stock should go through obstacle 1 in a counter-clockwise direction with minimum stress to the stock. The dog's ability to keep all the stock on the fence and moving at the entrance is important. His ability to keep the drive/fetch going at this point will prevent the stock from stopping at the corner. He should be able to turn back stock trying to go on the wrong side of the obstacle.

Example of point losses on the drive/fetch: Losing control after the stock come out of the pen; stopping the drive by turning them around and heading them back to the pen; out of contact with stock/drift.

**COURSE POINT = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 20**

**CROSS-DRIVE/FETCH THROUGH OBSTACLE 2:** Scoring starts when the stock exit obstacle 1 and ends when the stock exit obstacle 2 or after two attempts have been made. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) put through the obstacle by the dog the first time they go through and Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from the exit of obstacle 1 directly to obstacle 2 and through the obstacle in a counter-clockwise direction with minimum stress to the stock. The dog's ability to make a cross-drive from obstacle 1 to obstacle 2 exhibits his ability to prevent problems from occurring when the stock see daylight after exiting obstacle 1. This task often involves actions of turning back stock that break back down the arena. The dog should be able to control these animals without simply following them to the other end of the arena and bringing them back again. After entering obstacle 2, it is important the dog show control and obedience to allow the entire herd to progress through the exit, rather than part of them breaking back around the ends of the obstacle.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 25**

**SET -UP AND WORK AT CENTER CHUTE (For Open and Advanced Dogs Only):**

Scoring begins when stock exit obstacle 2 and ends when the stock exit the center chute or after two attempts have been made. Course points are received for the number of head (or %) the dog put through the chute the first time through. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from obstacle 2 directly to and through the chute. After the stock exit obstacle 2, the stock are taken off the fence to the center of the arena. The dog must maintain control of the stock with no fences as aids and move the stock through the chute. Additional control point losses may result for excessive handler assistance such as too much use of crook or pushing stock.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 30**

**CONTROL TO AND REPEN:** Scoring begins after the last attempted obstacle and ends when the handler closes the repen gate. Once the repen gate is open the dog should move the stock as efficiently as possible to the repen. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) that dog put into the repen the first time. Control points are earned for how the work was

accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from the last attempted obstacle or center chute directly to the reopen with minimum stress on the stock. It makes sense to move the stock away from the gate before opening it.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 10**

All Handler's lines will be enforced. There will be a 15 point loss in Open for crossing over the Open Handler's line and a 50% point loss in Advanced for crossing over the Advanced Handler's line.

**GATHER:** Scoring begins when the dog is released and ends when the dog moves the stock past the Advanced Handler's line. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) completing the gather. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

The gather should show the ability of the dog to put all the stock together into a controlled bunch. The dog should come around the stock as widely as necessary or as possible to keep the stock calm and quiet. If the stock are on the fenceline when the dog is sent on the gather, and it is necessary to bring them off the fence, the dog should demonstrate the ability to go between the fence and the stock in a controlled manner. Once the dog has put all the stock together into a controlled bunch the handler will start the drive/fetch to the first obstacle. The stock do not need to be brought directly to the handler but may be brought in a straight line towards obstacle 1. Examples of possible loss of Control points are: splitting stock, excessive weaving of the stock, leaving some stock behind, circling stock, excessive running of stock, excessive barking, dog keeps looking at handler, holding stock on the back fence, deliberate driving of stock to the back fence before setting up the stock for the drive/fetch (shows no gather).

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 15**

**DRIVE/FETCH THROUGH OBSTACLE 1:** Scoring begins when the stock cross the Advanced Handlers Line and ends when the stock exits obstacle 1 or after two attempts have been made. Course B a clockwise course, requires a left hand drive/fetch; therefore, the stock should be moved towards obstacle 1 on the left side of the free-standing pen. If the stock are driven/fetched down the right side, Control points may be lost. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) that complete the drive/fetch and obstacle 1. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the dog should have control of the stock at the end of the gather and take the stock directly to obstacle 1. See Course A Drive/Fetch description.

The stock should go through obstacle 1 in a clock-wise direction with minimum stress to the stock. The dog's ability to keep all the stock on the fence and moving at the entrance is important. His ability to keep the drive/fetch going at this point will prevent the stock from stopping at the corner. He should be able to turn back stock trying to go on the wrong side of the obstacle.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 20**

**CROSS -DRIVE/FETCH THROUGH OBSTACLE 2:** Scoring begins when the stock exit obstacle 1 and ends when they exit obstacle 2 or after two attempts at obstacle 2 have occurred.

Course points are received for the number (or %) the dog put through the obstacle the first time they go through. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from the exit of obstacle 1 directly to obstacle 2 and through the obstacle in a clock-wise direction with minimum stress to the stock. The dog's ability to make a cross-drive from obstacle 1 to obstacle 2 exhibits his ability to prevent problems from occurring when the stock see daylight after exiting obstacle 1. This task often involves actions of turning back stock that break back down the arena. The dog should be able to control these animals without simply following them to the other end of the arena and bringing them back again. After entering obstacle 2, it is important that the dog show control and obedience to allow the entire herd to progress through the exit, rather than allowing part of them to break back around the ends of the obstacles.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 25**

**SET-UP AND WORK AT FREE-STANDING PEN (For Open and Advanced Dogs Only):**

Scoring begins when the stock exit obstacle 2 and continues until one or more head of stock is penned and the gate closed, or until after two attempts have been made. Handler need not hold onto the gate. Course points are received for the number of head (or %) the dog put into the pen. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from obstacle 2 directly into the free-standing pen with minimum stress to the stock. After the stock exit obstacle 2, or after an attempt at obstacle 2 has been made, the handler may cross over the Advanced Handler's line in order to work the pen. The handler may not cross over the Open Handler's line. If he does, he will lose 50% of his score. The stock should be taken off the fence and moved towards the opening of the pen. The dog must maintain control of the stock and take precision commands. The stock should be brought up to the mouth of the pen and allowed to settle while entering, with the dog holding one side and the handler the other. Additional control point losses may result for excessive handler assistance such as too much use of crook and/or pushing stock. Once the free-standing pen is completed, the handler may assist his dog in bringing the stock out of the pen. No points will be awarded for this activity. However, time may be called for any abuse to the stock while this is being done.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 30**

**CONTROL TO AND REPEN:** Scoring begins after the last attempted obstacle and continues until the handler closes the repen gate. Course points are earned for the number of head (or %) the dog put into the repen the first time. Control points are earned for how the work was accomplished.

Ideally, the stock should go from the last attempted obstacle or free-standing pen directly to the pen with minimum stress to the stock. It makes sense to move the stock away from the gate before opening it.

**COURSE POINTS = 5 CONTROL POINTS = 10**

All Handler's lines will be enforced. There will be a 15 point loss for crossing over the Open Handler's line in Open and a 50% point loss for crossing over the Advanced Handler's line in Advanced.

## MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

### COURSE A

TAKE PEN-RELEASE OF STOCK: If the take pen is deemed to small or unsafe to use by the judge and course director, a gather may be used instead of the take pen. If a gather is used, it will follow the same rules as the gather in Course B. At no time can the Advanced Handler cross the advanced handler line without a 50% loss or the Open Handler cross the open handler line without a 15 point loss.

### COURSE B

HANDLER'S POSITION ON GATHER-STARTED AND OPEN: No restrictions. They may start their gather from whatever position is most advantageous for their dogs. Their dogs may be at their sides or left on a down while the handler repositions themselves before they send their dog. The exception to this is that at no time can the Open Handler cross the Open Handler's line without a 15 point loss.

ADVANCED HANDLERS: Handler must stand by the Free-standing pen on the Reopen side of the Advanced Handler's line when sending the dog on the gather. Handlers may stand on either side of the pen. If the Handler does cross the Handler's line, he will lose 50% of his score. Once the dog has been sent, the Advanced Handler is free to move about on the reopen side of the Advanced Handler's line. The Advanced Handler can not cross over the Advanced Handler's line to open the Free-standing pen gate until after obstacle 2 has been completed for Course points (at least one head must clear it), or until at least one attempt has been made on obstacle 2. Course points will be awarded only for those stock completing the obstacle before the handler crossed over the line. While doing the Free-standing pen the Advanced Handler may move about and does not have to remain at the gate, but can not cross over the Open Handler's line without losing 50% of his score. After an attempt is made at obstacle 2, the handler may cross over the handlers line to open the gate of the Free-standing pen with only Course point losses and not 50% of their score.

Once the Free-standing pen is completed, the dog and/or handler will remove the stock from the pen but this will not be scored as part of the Course points for the Free-Standing pen.

All handlers may assist their dogs in completing the Free-standing pen. There are no restrictions on where a handler must stand with the exception of the Open Handler's line. **HANDLERS DO NOT NEED TO STAND AT GATE.**

### COURSE A and B

#### Warnings

A 3 minute warning before the time ends will be given for sheep and cattle and a 2 minute warning before the time ends will be given for ducks. Handlers must acknowledge this warning.

DAYLIGHTING: If for some reason the stock go into the obstacles through the exits, they must be brought clear out of the obstacle and back into the obstacle through the entrance in order to receive Course points. (See diagram #3). This includes all of the obstacles, including the center chute. At least one head of stock must clear the entrance of the obstacle before being turned back

around for Course points to count. However, only those head of stock that clear the daylight line will count for Course points.

### **REASONS FOR BEING EXCUSED FROM THE ARENA:**

1. Unnecessary gripping or gripping in severe manner. Grips should be either on the head or legs. Body, neck, belly, back and ham are all unnecessary grips. A severe grip would be intentional wool pulling, hanging on, slashing and jerking a leg(s) out from under the animal. In the case of ducks, any mouthing, gripping, running over, or pouncing on is unnecessary.
2. OVERRUNNING OF THE STOCK BY THE DOG.
3. Lack of progress. If a contestant and his dog are unprepared and are unable to accomplish the task, time may be called even if no harm is being done to the stock.
4. Handler taking hold of the dog to discipline him while in the arena.
5. Any dog that can not be called off stock and must be chased down by the handler. It does not matter if the dog is not gripping. Running stock head long into a fence can have disastrous effects.

Dogs must enter the arena on leash. The leash may be removed as soon as the judge indicates he is ready or just before the run begins. After the run begins the handler may not restrain the dog by holding the collar or body in order to guide the dog around the stock. This does not mean that a handler can not take hold of the dog to check for injury, soundness, or foreign objects in the foot. An obstacle is considered completed if one or more head of stock is moved through an obstacle by the dog.

The contestant may not go back and try to acquire more points by repeating an obstacle.

Neither the center chute nor the free-standing pen need to be completed in order to receive a qualifying score in any division.

It is up to the contestant to make sure the judge has his correct armband number and division in which he is trialing before he starts the run.

Any contestant may call time on themselves at anytime, and it is highly appreciated if the situation warrants it. All contestants may reopen at any time after obstacle 1 is attempted and receive a score.

Judges may ask a contestant to reopen stock rather than call time and still give a score.

### **EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE POINT LOSSES FOR ABILITY TO CONTROL STOCK:**

- splitting stock
- excessive weaving of the stock
- leaving one or more head of stock behind
- circling stock
- excessive running of stock

- excessive barking
- dog keeps looking at handler
- purposely driving stock to the back fence before starting lift and fetch (on gather)
- undue stress to stock caused by dog or handler
- losing control of stock
- "drift" - when dog is out of contact with the stock and the stock wander through the obstacle(s) despite the dog
- excessive barking that produces no results
- dog sniffing ground or eating grass, dirt, etc., and avoiding working.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHILE DETERMINING ABILITY TO CONTROL STOCK**

Difficult stock and dog's control over them - A dog should not lose control points if the stock are difficult and it takes time for the dog to manage them. The dog with difficult stock should not lose more points than a dog with a cooperative draw as long as the dog is able to stay in control.

**For questions about ASCA, ASCA programs, or Australian Shepherds, [click here](#).  
For dead links or comments about the site, contact the [ASCA Webmaster](#).  
Copyright © 2001 Australian Shepherd Club of America, Inc.**