

Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs, Inc.
Specialized Operational Air Scent/Area Test

Purpose

The specialized operational air scent/area test demonstrates the ability of a handler and their canine partner to locate two hidden subjects in a defined area within a prescribed time period. This test shall demonstrate the ability of the canine to search, to perform a trained final response, and for the handler to correctly read the behavior of their canine partner. It shall also demonstrate the ability of the Handler to plan and follow an appropriate search strategy, download and upload GPS data and execute good area coverage.

Prerequisites

1. Operational handler in good standing
2. Request to test specialized air scent/area form approved by governing board
3. Completed necessary checklist
4. Attendance at a minimum of four (4) searches
5. Training logs for air scent/area searches consistent with the level of training necessary to pass the test.
6. Haz-Mat awareness class (NFPA 472/CFR 29/910.120 Part Q or equivalent)
7. Bloodborne pathogens class (29CFR1910 or equivalent)
8. Crime scene preservation class (2 hour minimum course taught by law enforcement, crime scene technicians or equivalent).

Test Criteria

1. The test consists of two (2) subjects hidden in moderate terrain, within 250 acres. The team has five (5) hours to find the subjects. The test shall be conducted during daylight hours.
2. The team shall be evaluated on handler and dog endurance, strategy and navigational skills. The evaluator shall not know the location of the subjects (double blind). The team need not be accompanied by an evaluator if GPS collars are used.
3. The handler shall describe their dog's alerts, indications and trained final response prior to the start of the test. The canine must locate and alert on the subject independent of direction from the handler.
4. The team shall upload the search area from a computer to their GPS prior to the test and download the GPS track log to the computer upon completion and discuss coverage with the evaluator.

General Guidelines

1. The subjects shall be placed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the test. The subjects shall remain in one location during the entire test and should be instructed not to respond to the dog. Care should be taken to prevent dogs from being able track the subjects to their location.
2. The subject must not be someone that the dog has repeatedly trained on in any live-find discipline (trailing, area or avalanche); nor someone that regularly associates with the dog (i.e. family, teammates, etc.); nor someone who has recently (within 90 days) been used as a training subject for the dog. The subject should preferably be someone that the dog has never trained on before.
3. The evaluator shall conduct a briefing in which the handler shall be given pertinent information about the search scenario and answer any questions the handler might have. The evaluator shall not know the location of the subject.
4. The handler shall be responsible for formulating and articulating their search strategy and providing the evaluator with a description of their dog's final response. Changes in search strategy are permissible, however the handler must communicate their reasoning to the evaluator.
5. In the event that the handler sees the subject prior to dog's alert/indication, he/she shall inform the evaluator. The team shall continue their search until the dog alerts/indicates to the handler that they have found the subject, and the dog demonstrates its final response without encouragement. The handler must continue his/her search strategy and must not lead the dog to the subject in any way.
6. Once the dog has located the subjects, the dog shall demonstrate its final response. The handler shall mark the location of the subjects on his/her GPS.
7. At the conclusion of the test, the evaluator shall be responsible to complete the appropriate evaluation form and debrief the handler on their performance. The handler shall upload the GPS tracks and the coverage and strategy shall be discussed.

Evaluation Criteria

1. The team is adequately attired and has adequate supplies, equipment and water for the team.
2. The handler plans and executes a good search strategy based on a correct analysis of the situation, the conditions and the detection capabilities of the canine.

3. The handler and canine demonstrate good working stamina for the complete duration of the test.
4. The canine demonstrates good focus on the task at hand. The canine avoids wildlife interaction, responds to the handler's corrections/commands and readily returns to work after distractions.
5. The handler recognizes and correctly interprets the behavior of the canine.
6. The canine demonstrates the ability to detect human scent and the persistence to work the scent from the point of detection to the scent source (the subject).
7. The canine demonstrates an easily identifiable, trained indication of a find (e.g., bark alert or recall/refind).

Recertification

Recertification is required every two (2) years.