

Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs, Inc.
HRD Water Test

Purpose

The HRD water test demonstrates the ability of a handler and their canine partner to locate the scent of human remains coming from under water from the shoreline and on open water from a boat. This test shall demonstrate the ability of the canine to search for and recognize the scent of human remains, to perform a trained final response, and for the handler to correctly read the behavior of their canine partner.

Prerequisites

1. Operational handler in good standing
2. Request to test water HRD form approved by governing board
3. Complete necessary checklist
4. Attendance at a minimum of four (4) searches
5. Training Logs for water HRD consistent with the level of training necessary to pass the test.

Test Criteria

1. The test consists of two stations; a shoreline search along approximately 300 feet of shoreline on a body of water with a current of less than one knot and an open water search from a boat in an area of 2 to 3 acres on a body of water with a current of less than one knot. Boundaries of each station shall be identified with flagging and/or GPS coordinates.
2. The team has 30 minutes to complete the shoreline station and 45 minutes to complete the open water station.
3. On the shoreline station, the handler must mark with a GPS their final location within two times the distance the source is from the shore (e.g. if the source is 10 feet from the water's edge, the GPS location must be within 20 feet of the source on either side).
4. On the open water station, the handler must mark with a GPS their final location within 100 feet of the source.
5. Upon interpreting the dog's final response, the handler shall advise the evaluator and mark the location on a GPS. Any identified (GPS'd) final response that is incorrect shall constitute as a fail of that station. If the team fails one station, that station maybe retested at the same testing event or within 45 days of passing the other station. If both tests are not taken at the same testing event, they must be passed within 45 days of each other. If the team fails both stations, the entire test must be repeated at a later date after proof of the completion of more training to remedy the problem.

General Guidelines

The HRD material, referred to as “source”, shall be 200 - 500 grams of human bone and/or tissue. The source shall be contained in such a way that no particulate matter can enter the water, but it shall still allow scent to escape. Care must be taken to prevent contamination from other evaluation areas.

2. The source should be placed a minimum of one to hour prior to the start of the search to allow the scent to rise. The shoreline source shall be placed no closer than 10 feet or farther than 20 feet from the bank and shall be between 3 feet and 10 feet below the surface of the water. The open water source shall be between 10 feet and 20 feet below the surface of the water. No buoys should be used in the testing area.
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 sources (double blind test) and should have another qualified handler place the sources.
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. The canine should give a recognizable change in behavior when it initially detects scent and follow it to identify the location of the actual source. Changes in search strategy are permissible, however the handler must communicate their reasoning to the evaluator. Once the dog locates the source, the dog shall demonstrate its final response.
5. The boat shall be safe for the body of water being utilized and rated to carry both the dog and people necessary to conduct the evaluation. Everyone aboard the boat shall wear approved PFD’s at all times. The boat shall contain at least 2 paddles or oars. The dog must be under the handler’s control at all times. The dog must be able to load calmly and safely into the boat and obey basic commands while on board.
6. At the conclusion of the test, the evaluator shall be responsible to complete the appropriate evaluation form and debrief the handler on their performance. GPS’s locations shall be reviewed and analyzed along with currents, winds, source depths and other factors to determine the results of the test. Verification with a certified dog to clarify scent location is permissible.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Team is adequately attired and has adequate supplies, equipment and water for the team.
2. Dog locates sources within the allotted time and performs the final response.
3. Handler marks the sources within the allowable distance from the source.
4. No false alert is given by the dog and called by the handler.

Recertification

Recertification is required every two (2) years.