

## Tracking with Sealyham Terriers

American Kennel Club tracking events are the competition form of canine search and rescue. These Tracking events provide training for dogs and their handlers to meet some human needs for tracking and finding lost humans or other animals, as well as, demonstrating the extremely high level of scent capability that dogs possess.

The AKC's Tracking Tests allow dogs to demonstrate their natural ability to recognize and follow human scent. This vigorous outdoor activity is great for canine athletes. Unlike Agility and Obedience events that require a dog to qualify three times, a dog only needs to complete one track successfully to earn each title.

### **Tracking Dog (TD)**

A dog earns a TD by following a track 440 to 500 yards long with three to five changes of direction. The track is laid by a human tracklayer and is "aged" 30 minutes to two hours before the dog begins scenting. The goal is to use the scented track to locate an article left at the end of the trail by the tracklayer. The owner follows the dog on a long leash and can encourage the dog during the tracking test.

### **Tracking Dog Excellent (TDX)**

The TDX is earned by following an "older" track (three to five hours) that is also longer (800 to 1,000 yard) and has five to seven directional changes with the additional challenge of human cross tracks.

### **Variable Surface Tracking (VST)**

In the real world, dogs track through urban settings, as well as through wilderness. A VST dog has demonstrated this ability by following a three- to five-hour-old track that may take him down a street, through a building and other areas devoid of vegetation.

### **Champion Tracker (CT)**

A dog that has successfully completed all three tracking titles (TD, TDX and VST) earns the prestigious title of Champion Tracker.

Owners who do tracking with their dogs find joy in seeing the dogs at work using their innate scenting skills. If you and your dog like the outdoors, try tracking!

Tracking was originally part of the Utility class, and a dog had to pass a

separate tracking test in order to earn a UD. For roughly the first ten years, tracking received one paragraph of description in the regulations, which set out the barest basics of length and age of the track. On the day of the test, the tracklayers were to walk the tracks, deposit the article, and retrace their steps to remove all but the two starting flags. By 1938, it was added that the tracklayer could not wear rubber-soled shoes, and the dog had to be on a 30-40 foot leash and work without help from the handler. By 1943, the tracklayers were required to follow the track, deposit the article, and walk directly off the course.

In 1947, tracking was made a separate class, and more detail began to appear in the regulations:

- The tracklayers were required to wear leather-soled shoes until they deposited the article, whereupon they were to put on a pair of rubbers and walk off the course at a right angle.
- The article was to be a leather glove or wallet. Finally, the dog was permitted one additional chance to take the scent between the starting flags, provided he had not passed the second flag.

It is obvious from the changes in the regulations that there must have been considerable discussion of how a track was to be properly laid by the tracklayer. Tracking and advanced tracking regulations were destined eventually to swell, from the original single paragraph of description in 1936, to forty-five pages today.