



Search and Rescue Dogs of Colorado

Air Scent Task Book

Record taskbook variables in your log book each time you train that variable.

This Task Book has been developed as a continuation of foundational training and to assist a handler in preparing for certification testing and effective fielding of their search dog. **This is not intended as an all-inclusive training program, rather as a suggestions for your training program.**

SARDOC members start their dogs in foundation trailing even if they want to eventually certify in the Air Scent Discipline. This allows a handler to learn to read their dog's body language indicators (BLIs) in a controlled setting, building a strong foundation between handler and dog, which in turn will make the transition to air scent much easier.

The Air Scent Task book lists many of the conditions you are likely to find on missions or certification tests, so you should train on as many of these variables as you can. It is recommended to complete at least 75% of the listed air scent tasks before requesting the Certification test. Tasks are organized by category but do not have to be completed in the order they are listed.

Remember – training a SAR Dog is a dynamic process and it is often tempting to rush steps. It is much easier to build your foundation at a slower pace than to rush through and later have to go back and correct problems developed in training that may have been avoided. Since these tasks are not listed in order, handlers must be careful not to attempt to train on complicated variables before mastering the simpler ones. Always consult with experienced handlers to see what problems are appropriate for your current level of training.

Use this Task Book as a basic guide, continuing to expand your training and working to challenge yourself and your dog. Variables should be regularly mixed throughout your training and repeated in different weather conditions and seasons. Whenever a new variable is introduced in training, you should reduce the other variables in the training to a level you are very comfortable with. For example, the first time you practice in the rain you should reduce the size of the area to something you have been successful at for a while.

Note: Any additional ideas to be added to this Task Book should be directed to the Training Director.

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Subject Variations

- Lying down/unresponsive
- Sitting/standing
- Obvious/in the open
- Completely Concealed
- 'Suspicious' looking/acting
- Moving (e.g. wandering, running, walking towards dog, walking away from dog, before or after the dog makes initial contact with the subject)
- Subject in a building (outbuilding, barn, etc)
- Subject in a tree or inaccessible
- Light burial (leaves, light snow, man-made objects)

Weather Conditions

- Rain
- Snow (e.g. actively snowing, packed snow)
- Cold (wind chill below 0 degrees F)
- Hot (temperature above 80 degrees F)
- Fog
- Dry (below 20% relative humidity)
- Moist (above 25% relative humidity)
- Light wind (4-6 mph)
- Strong Wind (>20 mph)
- No Wind (<1 mph)
- Up-sloping winds
- Down-sloping winds
- Intermittent/swirling winds

Distractions

- Large Wildlife (e.g. deer, elk)
- Small Game (e.g. rabbit, squirrel)
- Domestic Livestock (e.g. cows, horses, llamas)
- Support and/or second search team using audible attraction (e.g. whistling, shouting for subject)
- Second dog team working in adjacent area
- Second dog team working in same area
- People in area (e.g. hikers)
- Other dogs in area (e.g. on leash, off leash)
- Other searchers in area

- Animal carcass (e.g. large/medium/small)
- Bitches in heat.

Terrain/Vegetation Features

- Water within search area (e.g. pond, lake, marsh, stream)
- Steep Terrain
- Rock Outcroppings (e.g. subject at base, in middle, at top of rocks)
- Meadows (e.g. short grass, tall grass)
- Thick brush/Scrub Oak
- Aspen
- Rough Ground Cover (e.g. cactus, shale, deep snow)
- Trees (e.g. thin, dense woods)
- Gullies/Ravines (e.g. subject at high, mid, low point of ravine, subject near but not in ravine)
- Roads/Trails/Game Trails

Scent Discrimination/Scent Acquisition Variables

- Scent Article (e.g. packaged in bag, lying on ground)
- Indirect Scent Article (e.g. from door handle, gauze wipe from car seat)
- Strangers in adjacent area
- Strangers “decoy” in same area (e.g. stationary, moving, upwind, downwind)
- Articles in area (e.g. from subject, not from subject)

Time Subject in Place/Size of Area

- Subject in position >1 hour, 40 acres ($\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4}$ mi)
- Subject in position >1 hour, 80 acres ($\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{2}$ mi)
- Subject in position >1 hour, 100 acres ($\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{5}{16}$ mi)
- Subject in position >2 hours, 200 acres ($\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{5}{8}$ mi)
- Subject in position >2 hours, 300 acres ($\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{5}{8}$ mi)
- Subject in position >3 hours, >320 acres ($\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ mi)
- Subject in position >2 hours, then moves to another location

Specific Training Setups

- Eddies
- Looping Effect
- Non-contiguous Scent pools (e.g. different ages, locations)
- Multiple Subjects
- Negative Area: work an area that does not contain the subject, then work the area that does contain the subject
- Unknown area: work an area not knowing if the subject is in the area or not.
- Nose time (work longer and longer negative areas, up to 8 hours. Know your dog’s ability to work effectively for an entire operational period before you get certified)
- Early find: (after dog and handler are able to work long (2+hr) problems, set up a

- problem where the dog obtains a strong scent cone within 15 minutes)
- Scent cone interrupted by an impassable barrier (river, fence, cliff)

Recall/Refind

(if your dog has a hold-and-bark alert, do similar variations)

- Handler at different distances from dog and subject at the time of the find (e.g. 10 yards, 50 yards, >100 yards)
- Handler is motionless with different postures when the dog returns for the recall /refind (e.g. facing the dog, facing away from the dog)
- Handler is walking when the dog returns for the recall/refind (e.g. walking towards the dog, walking away from the dog)
- Handler varies eye contact with the dog when it returns for the recall/refind (e.g. handler makes eye contact, handler does not make eye contact)
- Dog can see handler at the time of the find (e.g. dog can see handler, dog is out of sight of handler)

Strategies

An airscent handler should use a variety of strategies during training to see which ones work best in which cases

- Standard Grid
- Perimeter-first
- Ridges/ top-down
- Valleys/ bottom-up
- Subsections
- Building Search
- Urban Search
- Others