Search and Rescue Dogs of Colorado

Trailing 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 suggestions for your training program.**

The Trailing 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 trailing tasks before requesting the Certification test. Task check-offs are an observed competency of individual skills. 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 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 length and age of the trail 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
- Standing (e.g. quiet/noisy)
- Obvious/in the open
- Completely Concealed
- 'Suspicious' looking/acting

Weather Conditions

- Rain
- Snow (e.g. actively snowing, packed snow)
- Strong Winds (>20 mph)
- Hot/Sunny (temperature above 80 degrees F)
- Dry (below 20% relative humidity)
- Moist (above 25% relative humidity)
- Fog
- 'Extreme' Cold (wind chill below 0 degrees F)

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 Crossing
- Rock Outcroppings
- Road Crossing
- Scent Pool
- Thick Brush/Scrub Oak
- Aspen
- Steep Terrain
- Trail Crossings (e.g. game, hiking)

Scent Discrimination Variables

- Split Trail (i.e. "y" or "T" off trail with subject and decoy)
- Split Trail (3 subjects, staggered 'break-away' turns)
- Split Trail with Decoy Subject still in place
- Cross Tracks (same age trail as subject)
- Cross Tracks (different trail intersection angles)
- Cross Tracks (fresher than subject's trail)
- Decoy Subject (visible 'decoy' person on or near subject's trail)

Age Progression / Conditions

- 2+ hrs aged during strong wind conditions
- 6+ hrs aged with fresh snow over tracks
- 12+ hrs aged overnight
- 24+ hrs aged
- 48+ hrs aged
- Subject in position 3+ hrs
- "Hot Trail Intersect" (aged trail is crossed by subject's hot trail)

Starts / Casting Drills

- Negative Cast (no trail present)
- Road Cast (acquire trail leaving a roadway)
- Trail Cast (acquire trail leaving a hiking trail)
- Freshest Trail (subject lays aged and later fresh trail from same PLS)
- Trailhead (busy trailhead parking lot)
- High Traffic Trail Cast (acquire trail leaving busy hiking trail)

- Reacquiring Trail (after trail was "lost")