

HERDING CAPABILITY TEST

ELIGIBILITY:

1. This program shall be open to all herding breeds and multi-purpose breeds with herding background as listed following these Herding Capability Test Program Rules.
- 2. Dogs must be six months of age or older.**
3. Spayed bitches and neutered dogs may participate.
4. Bitches in heat may take part in tests, but must wait until all other dogs have participated.
5. Dogs must be sound and in good health. Any dog which appears to be unfit will be removed at the tester's discretion; examples are: lameness, injury, illness, advanced pregnancy.
6. Dogs must have prior training to:
 - come reliably when called and
 - stop (down, sit or stand-stay);

This requirement must be made clear to owners before they enter. For first-leg HCT tests, it is highly recommended that dogs have had prior supervised exposure to livestock, although it is not a requirement that dogs have had prior herding training. Second-leg tests require that dogs have had some basic herding training; this is to be made clear to prospective entrants.

7. Owners of participating dogs need not be members of any club or organization.
8. A dog owned by the tester or any member of the tester's immediate family or household may not be evaluated by that tester, nor may a dog be evaluated by a tester who has been the owner or the primary trainer/handler of the dog within the last six months.
9. Dogs which have been in previous tests and have not passed shall be eligible to be tested again on another day.

TITLE REQUIREMENTS

1. For each title, two qualifying scores are required, earned under different judges. Upon completion of the second leg, a certificate will be issued awarding the title.
2. Test titles may be earned on any single type of stock or combination of stock. The type of stock on which the second leg was earned will be indicated by use of a small initial after the title: "s" for sheep, "d" for ducks, "g" for goats, "ge" for geese, "c" for cattle.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HERDING CAPABILITY TESTS

1. Arenas must be well fenced, have good footing and be free from hazardous obstructions. If two adjacent arenas are being used simultaneously, visibility screens must be set up between them.
2. Safety and humane treatment of the animals are of utmost importance. There must be a separate, secure rest area for the stock, with shade and water. Food must be provided for stock kept overnight. Water must be available for dogs. During the event, animals are to be removed from the arena at any sign of stress and promptly given any necessary care. A veterinarian must be in attendance or on call.
3. Waiting dogs and people must keep a sufficient distance from the arena where a dog is being tested. There shall be no outside interference with a dog being tested.
4. No other dog shall be in the arena with the dog being tested (other than, under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the tester, a well-trained backup dog).
5. Dogs may wear only plain buckle or snap-lock collars.

HERDING CAPABILITY TESTS

1. HCT tests are to be held in the setting of a clinic; public venues such as fairs or similar general public events are not accepted.
2. Arena size for HCT tests must be a minimum of 50 x 50 ft., up to approximately 80 x 80 ft. Corners must be rounded; oval or round enclosures are preferred for first-leg HCT tests.
3. The tester may handle the dog during first-leg tests.
4. For second-leg tests, the owner or owner's agent must handle the dog, with verbal assistance or brief intervention by the tester being acceptable.
5. In order to pass, dogs must be tested off-lead or with lead dragging in first-leg tests, off-lead in second-leg tests, and may not be held or physically touched by any person or tied to any object.
6. **First-leg tests** may take the form of a basic instinct test and are fairly free-form, with no set path of travel.
 1. The dog is brought in on a long line approximately 6 to 15 ft. in length. At some point while on the line, the dog must demonstrate a stop (down, sit or stand) and a recall before the line is dropped or removed. A dog which cannot be recalled shall not be let off line.
 2. Dogs may not be struck or have objects thrown at them with the intent to strike them during a test. If it is necessary to do this to protect the stock, the dog must be immediately removed from the arena and will not pass.
7. **Second-leg tests** require a more controlled passage from one end of the arena to the other (easily visible markers, such as ribbons or placards, may be placed on the fence at opposite ends of the arena to help indicate direction, or cones may be set on the ground 10 ft. in from the fence at opposite ends of the arena). The stock should be set out clear of the fence, well away from any corner.
 1. The dog is put in position and the lead removed; the dog should hold a brief stay (pause) before being sent to collect the stock.
 2. The stock are moved across the arena to the opposite end, then returned to the vicinity of the set-out point, then taken again to the opposite end of the arena, and brought back a second time to the vicinity of the set-out point (approximately four traverses of the arena).
 3. The dog is given a final stop command, and recalled.
8. Dogs are not to be allowed to harass, chase, rough up, trample or grip stock. Dogs evidencing aggression are not to be let off lead. Unruly, uncontrollable dogs or dogs which attempt to attack the stock must be taken from the test area immediately. Dogs which are excessively fearful of the stock should be removed. In second-leg tests, dogs showing lack of progress should be removed from the arena after five minutes.
9. **Each dog's formal test session shall be a maximum of 10 minutes**, within which time the session should be concluded upon the dog fulfilling the requirements for passing. Tests are to be conducted in a consistent and fairly standard manner as described in the guidelines.
10. The tester must provide detailed comments on each passing form, and spend time with each participant providing guidance and information regarding the particular dog and herding in general; comments and information should be presented to spectators also. Education is of great importance in herding tests.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PASSING HERDING TESTS

First Leg:

A dog which, after a period of introduction, shows sustained interest in herding livestock, either going around them, gathering them and moving them toward the handler, or moving them ahead of the handler to drive them, or a combination.

A dog which works quietly, a dog which barks (a little or a lot), a dog which may feint as though to nip, or actually nips if on larger animals providing it is appropriate for the situation and not a threat to the health or safety of the livestock, are all acceptable. A dog may be loose-eyed or may show some degree of eye. A variety of approaches and styles are acceptable.

It is to be remembered that many dogs through inexperience will make mistakes in their early exposures to livestock, but at all time the tester must see clear-cut evidence of herding instinct, with the dog attempting to keep the animals grouped and attempting to control their movement. Dogs which merely chase, play or push stock around, not really herding, must not be passed; distinction must be made between herding behavior and chasing. Dogs should show some responsiveness to direction.

Second Leg:

In addition to the above, the dog must exhibit the following: moving the stock in a controlled fashion from one end of the arena to the other; a stop; and a recall.

NOT PASSABLE

First Leg:

- A dog which, after a period of introduction, fails to show sustained herding interest in livestock.
- A dog which repeatedly leaves or attempts to leave the working area.
- A dog which makes little or no attempt to control the grouping and movement of the stock.
- A dog which shows aggression toward the livestock so strong and of a nature to be considered a threat to the health or safety of the livestock.
- Any dog which repeatedly splits the group and attacks one or several animals, or grips any animal and holds on.
- A dog which evidences chasing rather than herding behavior.
- Any dog which, for whatever reason, cannot be tested off lead or with lead dragging.
- Any dog which shows fear of the livestock in such a fashion that the dog cannot demonstrate herding instinct.

Second Leg:

In addition to the above,

- a dog which fails to demonstrate the required additional skills,
- which does not move the stock in a controlled fashion,
- which constantly and unnecessarily circles the stock,
- which cannot be tested off lead,
- which cannot be handled by its owner or owner's agent.

Dogs not passing may be retested at another time.

NOTE:

It must be remembered that while basic herding tests may provide a starting place, their scope is very limited. They may give some picture of possibilities, but passing such a test cannot be taken as proof of a dog's herding abilities. Only time and experience will provide a clear picture of a dog's abilities. A lot of groundwork, time and education are required to produce a skilled herding dog.

The Herding Capability Test Program is run on a pass/not pass system and leads to the title "Herding Capability Tested" (HCT).