

WATER RESCUE DOG EXCELLENT TEST

HANDBOOK FOR JUDGES, STEWARDS & TEST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SECTION 1

Applications for WRDX Tests:

- Clearly indicate to the Water Test Application Contact which judges will judge each level of the Water Test day/weekend.
- Insure the premium list includes the schedule for each division to be tested and a statement indicating WRDX bitches in season will be judged after all other divisions have been tested.
- The maximum number of dogs to be tested per day, as set forth in the Water Test Regulations is 30. (See "Entry Limitation, page 11 of Water Test Regulations). On average, it takes approximately 30 minutes to test each WRDX entrant. This should be one of the factors used to arrive at the stated maximum number of entries for any given day in a Water Test weekend. The WRDX division may have a separate entry limit but the limit for the entire test may not exceed 30 for each day. Unused WRDX slots may be filled with WD/WRD slots, but this must be mentioned in the premium list.

SECTION 2

Test Site Specifications

The Water Test Regulations for a WD/WRD water test require usable waterfront to be a minimum of 75 feet, with the water extending at least 200 feet from the shore. For the WRDX division the site must also have a minimum of 75 feet of waterfront but the water markers must be at least 100 feet apart. In marking the beach area for the WRDX division, a center marker is used with markers on either side, 35 feet apart. These serve as the markers for the Multiple Person Rescue (Exercise #2). It is extremely important to place the water markers wider than the test site for two reasons:

- Retrieval of water markers at the WRDX division causes the dog to fail.
- Safety. If the side water markers are either tied down or tied to one another (as in many test sites), the likelihood of the dog becoming tangled is much greater. An optional plan for water markers can be found on the water test time line on the NCA web site.

The shoreline to the sides of the usable waterfront should not be so close (as in a bay) as to tempt the dogs to take the stewards to the sides of the test site, rather than back to the boat.

Prior to the start of the test, a center marker is set up with two additional beach markers set 35 feet away from the center marker. It is highly recommended that a second set of beach markers be set in front of the original markers to give a better line of sight for the water stewards. Side markers are set in the water on both sides at 75 ft., 100 ft, and 150 ft.

SECTION 3

Equipment

It is strongly suggested that judges review the WRDX required equipment, as indicated in the WRDX regulations, with the test committee before the test weekend by phone call, letter or e-mail. The test committee is responsible for supplying hand/arm protection as indicated in the WRDX Test Regulations, a four person raft that will sit flat on the surface of the water as required in the regulations, and anchor systems that can be brought up or untied BEFORE the dog reaches the boat in each of the required exercises. Judges should also inquire as to whether all calling stewards meet the restrictions for “overly familiar”, as currently approved by the NCA Board.

DURING THE TEST

SECTION 4

Pre-Swim

- The Committee will assign a steward to monitor the 15 minute pre-swim, start and end time, or confer with the judges to determine if they want to call for the pre-swim.
- Exhibitors are reminded that only one retrieving article is allowed in the testing area during pre-swim.
- Exhibitors are reminded that no food is allowed in the testing area during pre-swim.
- Judges may use this time to note the wading depth for each dog in relation to the standing depth of each handler, as described in the regulations.

SECTION 5

Time Limits

All posted time limits for the exercises are suggestions. As stated in the Water Test Regulations, “if a dog began working immediately at the start of the exercise and continued actively working during the entire exercise” time limits may be extended. Dogs may be called off of an exercise for safety reasons, or if the judges deem the dog physically incapable of **continuing**. Otherwise, the dogs should be permitted a reasonable period of time to complete an exercise, without regard to whether one dog is a faster or slower swimmer than another.

SECTION 6

Steward Responsibilities

Beach Stewards

Beach stewards help the test flow in a timely manner. Duties of beach stewards include:

- Making sure the equipment is ready for each entrant.
- Calling entrants to the beach.
- Taking the entrant’s leash and returning it to them before they leave the test area.

- Attaching the 8 foot line with bumper to the front of the row boat, and removing it after the exercise is completed. This job may also be performed by the boat steward for this exercise.
- Helping to steady the boat when the handler and dog are boarding.
- Handling the 125 foot line to the handler before the “Line to Shore” exercise and taking it off the beach at the conclusion of the exercise.

Water Stewards

Stewards in the boats or in the water must be wearing coast guard approved life jackets and secure foot protection. Life jackets are optional for beach stewards but they must wear foot protection.

SECTION 7

THE TEST EXERCISES

Exercise #1 Abandoned Boat

One rowing steward

Second steward is optional if needed to help with the anchor.

Preparation:

A steward will attach the eight-foot line with bumper to the bow of the boat, with the line and bumper placed in the boat for use by the rowing steward.

The rowing steward takes the boat out 75 feet, parallel to shore, anchors the boat; and then rests the oars on the boat. The boat may move freely around the anchor in the current or wind. It is crucial that the steward watch for the dog to approach the boat, since the anchor is to be detached BEFORE there is any chance that the dog would be able to retrieve the anchor line, or become tangled in any lines or poles used for the anchor system. Once the anchor is detached the rowing steward will gently toss the bumper off the seaward side of the boat being sure to time this so that the bumper is in the water before the dog goes behind the boat. The rowing steward does not touch or move the bumper or line again. The rowing steward then faces away from the dog and does not make eye contact. During judge’s instructions to stewards, the judges and rowing steward will discuss when to detach from the anchor system. Wind and currents may dictate the boat be left on the anchor longer compared to sites with calm bodies of water. The dog should NEVER be close enough to the boat for any safety or retrieving concerns to occur when the anchor system is detached or brought up into the boat. The rowing steward should ride quietly in the boat from this point on until the dog beaches the boat and the judges whistle completion of the exercise.

The bumper with floating line is removed from the bow of the boat at the completion of the exercise.

Exercise #2 Multiple Person Rescue

- One rowing steward,
- One ballast steward
- Three calling stewards (*TIP*: when possible, recruit fast swimming stewards)
- Two beach stewards
- Anchor system set to hold the boat at 150 feet from shore. The platform will be at the 150 foot mark.

Preparation:

Prior to the start of the test, it should be determined which calling stewards will call the dogs from each of the three positions, and which hand signals will be used by the rower to keep the stewards in place.

The rowing steward brings the boat to shore, where two beach stewards steady the boat. When the handler and dog is aboard and indicates readiness to proceed, the beach stewards will push the boat off, being careful to use a fluid motion so as to not jostle the dog off of the platform. The rowing steward takes the boat out so that the back of the platform is 150 feet from shore, the boat platform faces the shoreline, and is attached to the anchor system. It is important that this anchor be heavy enough and long enough to steady the boat in windy and rough conditions since the boat will be out at 150 feet from shore and possibly in deep water.

The rowing steward also employs the use of the oars to keep the boat in position as much as possible. When the boat drifts from its original position, it may significantly change the exercise for the dog.

While the boat is being rowed out to 150 feet from shore, the 3 calling stewards will swim out quietly, and to their designated positions.

- Drowner #1 will line up with the 1st marker on shore, and with the side water Marker which is set 100 feet from shore.
- Drowner #2 will line up with the center marker on shore, and with the side water marker which is 75 feet from shore.
- Drowner #3 will line up with the 3rd marker on shore, and with the side water marker which is set 100 feet from shore.

Drowning stewards will wait quietly in the water until signaled by the judges. Each of the drowning stewards will be alert at all times to hand signals pre-arranged for use by the rowing steward in case they drift out of position. **This is very important to remember.** In addition, drowning stewards should periodically look over their shoulders to check the beach marker they are lined up with, as well as side water markers to confirm their positioning is correct.

The rowing steward will watch to confirm the boat is steady in position, that the stewards remain in position, and also watch the judges for signals.

When the judges are satisfied that all stewards are in position and the handler is ready, one judge will give a brief arm signal to the stewards in the water to begin calling for help. From this point forward, the calling stewards will watch the rower, who will relay any signals from the judges to the callers, or who will signal the calling stewards as being out of position.

Each calling steward will call in a manner consistent with being in distress. It is permissible to praise the dog coming toward the stewards, as this would certainly occur in instances of real rescue. However, words of praise should always be intermingled with those asking for the dog to “help”, “come”, “save me”; etc., as during a real rescue situation. The dog’s name is not to be used. The stewards need not call in the same manner as one another. The dogs will naturally focus on a steward, heading towards the steward to bring him/her back to the boat. Stewards might expect the dogs to swim around them, in order to give the steward a greater opportunity to grab hold. However, stewards should always be ready to take hold of the dog any time the dog is close enough to the steward so long as the steward does not move out of position. In some instances, the dogs will be swimming just past a steward on the way to pick up a second, or even third steward. For this reason, calling stewards should be vigilant in grabbing hold of the dog if the dog is close enough to them at any time. If one steward is picked up and it is clear that the dog is heading for a second steward, the first rescued steward should move to hold on to whichever hip area of the dog will allow the second steward to take hold of the opposite hip area. It is suggested that when a dog opts to bring in all 3 stewards, the stewards will be in a towing formation with one steward on each hip of the dog and the final steward either holding the center of the dog or hanging onto the life jacket of one of the other stewards. All 3 stewards should be sure they are floating on top of the water and not hanging down. Judges should be observing the dogs for any sign of distress if the dogs opts to bring in 3 stewards at once.

The stewards will not aid the dog through the use of swimming strokes in returning to the boat. Should the dog, at any time, turn and head back to the boat with either one or two victims, the remaining steward(s) will soften their voice(s) considerably until the dog reaches the boat, and the handler touches hands with the steward(s). When the handler touches the steward(s), the remaining calling stewards should immediately resume the previous volume and intensity in calling for help to attract the dog away from the steward(s) and handler at the boat.

Those stewards brought back to the boat should quietly move to the opposite sides of the boat from one another, and remain behind the platform to give the dog and handler room to work with the rest of the stewards. The rescued stewards can also assist in steadying the boat. Rescued stewards should avoid conversation, which would create a severe temptation for the dog to return to the boat to check up on them. The instinct of the dogs in wanting to take care of those they have rescued cannot be taken lightly. For this reason, the rowing steward also uses hand signals, rather than verbal commands when needing to give directions to the stewards.

It may be anticipated that the dogs will swim around the boat between rescue attempts to check all sides for stewards needing assistance, especially since this is required in another exercise within the WRDX test. It is very important that rescued stewards avoid eye contact and conversation with the dogs once they have touched hands with the handler and have moved quietly to the sides of the boat. When the dog has rescued all stewards, or the exercise has been signaled to end by the judges for other reasons, the rowing steward will detach or pull up the anchor. If the handler stays on the boat, the rower will row to shore. If the handler swims back to shore, the rower can row back to the staging area for the next exercise. The rescued stewards will swim back to shore as quickly as possible and be clear of the test area so the next exercise may begin. The rescued stewards should not expect to be towed in to shore by the dog.

Exercise #3 Unconscious Victim

One steward

The steward is required to wear the prescribed hand/arm protection set forth in the WRDX Test Regulations. Full wet or dry suit is required, unless the weather/temperature is so hot that the steward would be too uncomfortable/overheated. If a full wet or dry suit is not worn, the steward must still wear a jacket or sleeves of wet suit material on both hands. The gloves and/or arm protection must be of sufficient length to reach the elbows.

Following a signal from the judge, the steward should quietly swim out to the 75 ft. ~~side~~ water markers, while lining up with the center beach markers. The steward does not make contact with, nor speak to the dog or handler while waiting to enter the water, or when swimming out to the designated water marker. Once in position, and upon receiving an arm signal from the judges, the steward must float on his/her back without swimming strokes, starting out with feet pointed towards shore. The current may cause the steward to drift from their original position. The steward's arms and legs should be floating as still as possible on top of the water. The hands of the steward will be "palm up" on the surface of the water and the arms will be straight out at a ninety degree angle with the body. Every attempt should be made by the steward to keep his/her eyes closed.

The steward will expect the dogs to approach and to take hold of one or the other of the steward's gloved hands, arms, or the life jacket. The dog may or may not circle the steward one or two times, requiring patience on the part of the steward. Depending on which hand, or where on the life jacket the dog takes hold of the steward, the steward may find himself turned in a slow circle and then towed back to shore. The handler has been instructed to wade into the water to the prescribed depth to meet the dog and steward in tow. The judges will whistle the exercise completed as soon as the handler takes hold of the steward.

If, at any time, the dog scratches the steward, swims over the steward, or uses too much mouth pressure, causing pain, the steward may stand up or call out to terminate the exercise. The steward should not tolerate discomfort at any time. The handlers are aware of this, and will have taught their dogs a gentle hold. At the conclusion of the exercise the handler will help the steward disengage from the dog.

Exercise #4 Capsized Raft

- One rowing steward.
- One ballast steward (optional)
- One calling steward.

Preparation:

A rowing steward will tow the calling steward in the raft to the center of the test area. This is efficiently done by means of a rope that the raft steward releases when in position at the center marker and 75 feet from shore.

Once the calling steward is in position the rowing steward will quickly exit the testing area, but remain in the water, outside of the testing area, to retrieve the raft at the conclusion of the exercise.

If conditions allow, the calling steward may use their arms to paddle the inflatable raft into position instead of being towed.

The Exercise:

The steward in the raft will watch for the arm signal from the judge to begin the exercise. This signal will be given as quickly as possible. The calling steward will then loudly call out for help as he/she capsizes and overturns the raft in one motion.

If weather or current conditions warrant the steward may begin in the water and flip the raft over his/her head while loudly calling for help.

The steward will hold the shore side of the raft up approximately 3 inches to be certain the raft is held parallel to shore as much as possible. The calling steward continues to call the dog for help, using words consistent with being in distress, such as “help me”, “come and save me”, etc. The calling steward does not use the dog’s name. The calling steward must lower the raft to lie flat on the surface of the water as the dog approaches and is within 10 feet from the raft. It may be helpful for the steward to measure this distance prior to the start of the test to better estimate the distance during the exercise. The calling steward may expect the dog to swim ~~in~~ under the raft from any side, and should be prepared to immediately grab hold of the dog for the ride out from under the raft. The dog is not expected to grab hold of the steward. The dog is permitted to exit any side of the raft. For the steward’s safety, the steward is permitted to lift up the side of the raft after the dog has exited from under the raft to avoid any down-turned handles or to ensure the steward’s life jacket does not catch on the raft in any way. The rescue is a success when the dog swims out from under the raft with the steward in tow. The steward will remain free floating and hold onto the dog until the dog reaches wading depth and the steward touches hands with the handler. The judges will immediately whistle completion of the exercise, at which time the steward may stand up.

Exercise #5 Line to Shore

- One rowing steward
- One ballast steward
- One calling steward
- Two beach stewards
- An anchor system

Two stewards are required to hold the boat steady in the water while the dog and handler get aboard. They will push the boat off shore when the handler indicates they are ready. A beach steward hands the 125-foot line to the handler. The handler brings the 125 ft. line, with him/her to the boat. The line may be on a winding device or in a container. When the handler indicates

readiness to the judges, the beach stewards will push the boat off. The rowing steward ~~may~~ will row the boat so that the back of the platform is 100ft. from shore. An anchor system may be used to enable the rower to keep the boat in position with the platform facing the shoreline. The handler indicates readiness to proceed and the judges signal the handler to give the dog the rope and to jump from the boat. The calling steward should have approached the shoreline to stand quietly near the water in the center of the test area as the boat was being rowed out. The calling steward will watch for the dog to have left the boat with the line in his/her mouth, to have surfaced the water, and is just STARTING TO SWIM TOWARDS SHORE before beginning to call the dog. The steward will not call the dog by name. The calling steward will loudly call for the dog to bring the rope to him/her and may also use arm motions. Praising words may be used in between commands for the dog to come with the rope. The judges will note that, while it is natural for the dogs to stand and look back to their handlers for further instructions once they reach their wading depth, the dogs should not turn back and begin swimming towards the boat before the completion of the exercise. Therefore, it is extremely important that the rowing steward keep the boat at the full distance until completion of the exercise.

The dog will deliver the line to the steward on shore. It is not the responsibility of the steward to determine commands or words that might be used to get the dog to hold onto the line long enough for the steward to take hold of the line. However, the steward should take hold of the line as soon as he/she is able to reach it while still on shore. The dog does not have to give up the line or leave the water.

The steward may move down the shoreline to meet the dog. The judges will whistle completion of the exercise as soon as the steward has hold of any part of the line. The steward should then immediately take hold of the dog's collar to detain the dog on shore or in shallow water. The handler will be riding back in the boat.

Exercise #6 Hidden Victims

- Two calling stewards
- One rowing steward
- One ballast steward (optional)

The two water stewards ride out on the platform of the boat, rowed by a third steward to 75 feet. The boat will be parallel to shore. (*“Tip”*: to save time, one of the stewards can bring the next dog's line with bumper to the boat at this time. When the Hidden Victims exercise is finished, the boat steward can remain at 75 feet from shore and attach the line to the boat preparing for the Abandoned Boat exercise. Note, if this option is chosen the boat must be in this position when the first dog to be tested enters the test area so that it is that same for every dog. The steward serving as ballast would lean forward onto their legs and remain still).

Once the boat is in place, the rower should attach the anchor system, or drop the anchor into the water. Each of the two water stewards then exit quietly from the platform and move to the seaward side of the boat. One water steward is at the bow of the boat, and the other is towards the stern. The stewards hold onto the lip of the boat and await instructions from the rower. The rowing steward gives a brief arm signal when the stewards are in place, where upon the judges will signal back to the rowing steward to quietly tell the calling stewards to begin calling for

help. The stewards should call as if in distress but their bodies and splashing should not be visible from shore. If the stewards cannot be heard well from shore they may also bang on the boat. The rowing steward should, at that time, bring the oars into the boat, and should remain quietly in the boat, avoiding eye contact with the dog.

When the dog approaches the boat, the anchor system *may* be detached or the anchor pulled up. This will prevent the dog from retrieving the anchor line or get tangled up in the line.

Should the dog come around the boat with only one of the two stewards in tow, the rowing steward re-attaches or drops the anchor again once the dog is well away from the boat with the steward to keep the boat in place until the dog approaches the boat to get the second steward.

The calling stewards should call in a manner consistent with being in distress; but without using the dog's name. Once the dog has appeared in sight of the stewards, praising words may be interspersed with those commanding the dog to come and save them. *The dog is to swim close enough for the steward to reach out and take hold of the dog while still having hold of the side of the boat. It is the dog's option to bring in one or both stewards at the same time. If, while towing the first steward, the dog swims close enough to the second steward so that the second steward is able to reach out and take hold of the dog, while still having hold of the side of the boat, the dog will be deemed to have opted to bring in both stewards at the same time. If the dog brings in both stewards at the same time, the stewards should take hold of the dog, one on each side near the hindquarters, or hip area. The stewards will ride quietly while the dog tows them to shore.* (quoted from rules).

While the dog is swimming back to shore with the steward(s) in tow, the handler will wade in to the pre-determined distance, preparing to grasp the steward(s) hand once at wading depth. The steward(s) may stand and walk out of the water as soon as the handler touches their hand. The judges will whistle completion of the exercise when the handler touches the hand of the second steward(s).

If the dog returns to shore with only one steward, the handler will immediately command the dog to swim back to the boat to retrieve the second steward. The rowing steward must be watching the handler and judges carefully at this point. There should not be a delay between the time the first steward stands up and leaves the water and when the judge signals the rower to tell the remaining steward to begin calling again. Although the handler may not touch the dog to keep him/her in the water waiting for further instructions, neither can the handler be expected to ask the dog to commit to swimming depth, towards the boat within 20 seconds if the calling steward is not calling for the dog. The judges, calling and rowing stewards must be alert for the sequence of the remainder of the exercise should a dog bring in only one steward at a time.

The handler remains at the pre-determined depth in the water until the dog returns with the second steward, arriving close enough to touch hands with the handler. The judges will immediately whistle completion of the exercise, at which point the steward may stand up and leave the water.