

Water Search Certification Evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of the Water Search Certification Evaluation is to accurately and uniformly assess a canine team's ability to effectively search for and locate to within a reasonable proximity a drowned person.

Objectives

- Demonstrate that the handler can plan, brief, and execute an effective search of the assigned areas, taking into account the conditions (e.g., air and water temperatures, wind, wave action, water currents, and tides, if applicable).
- Demonstrate that the canine will not be unduly distracted by, nor give its trained indication on null (with no scent) stimuli or negative (with non-human scent) stimuli.
- Demonstrate that the canine can detect and will perform its trained indication at the point of strongest concentration of scent from a whole body submerged in water.
- Demonstrate that the canine can detect and will perform its trained indication at the point of strongest concentration of scent from decomposing body parts submerged in water.
- Demonstrate that the handler can, given the indications from the canine under the prevailing conditions, identify the location, within reasonable proximity, of a submerged human scent source.
- Demonstrate that the canine can work effectively to identify submerged human scent both from a boat and from shore.

Criteria

In order to be eligible for the Water Search Certification Evaluation the canine team must have successfully completed:

- Prerequisites as stated in *Section 2.2*
- Canine Obedience Evaluation (see *Section 3*)
- Canine Agility Evaluation (see *Section 4*)
- The Water Search and Recovery Written Test with a passing grade of at least 75% (see Appendix 4).

Definitions

- **Passive Indication** – The dog indicates to the handler the positive scent source through passive means, such as sit or down.
- **Active Indication** – The dog indicates to the handler the positive scent source through active means, such as barking, touching, or recall/refind.

Evaluation Procedures

- A minimum of two (2) ARDA evaluators are required to conduct Water Search Certification Evaluation.
- Within the parameters set herein, the evaluators will determine the testing areas.
- The certification evaluation will consist of two (2) components:
 - Detection from a boat
 - Detection from shore
- Efforts shall be made to ensure consistent test conditions for all testing teams.
- Both active and passive indications are acceptable. Prior to starting the search, the handler must describe the canine's trained indication to the

evaluators. It is up to the handler to correctly interpret the canine's indications and/or body language. A canine's indication is not considered valid until the handler identifies it to the evaluators as an indication of human scent.

- The handler/dog team will be allowed a specific amount of time to search each test area. The handler will be given a 2 minute warning. The handler may declare an area completed before the allotted time has expired, but having done so may not re-enter the area later to re-search it.
- Human Remains scent sources will be of human origin and of a mixture of types and may be placed in a container (e.g., PVC pipe, jar, bag, etc) which is appropriately anchored or the material may be placed in a scent pump. The types of materials used as well as the vehicles used to contain them will be determined by the evaluators and may contain:
 - Soil sample from where a body has decomposed
 - Bone with tissue
 - Tissue
 - Hair or teeth mixed with other approved scent material

Positive scent sources may not include:

- Dry, bleached bone only
- Ashes
- Synthetic scent
- Distractions will be included in all search areas used for this evaluation. If the positive scent source is a diver in scuba or a scent pump or any other device that produces the visible cue of bubbles on the surface of the water, then at least one of the distractions must be a free-flowing regulator or similar device that produces bubbles on the surface of the water.
- Current, wind, wave action, and all weather conditions will be taken into account with regards to safety prior to and during the evaluation. The environmental conditions during the evaluation will not exceed 15 knots of wind or 2 feet wave height.
- The evaluator(s) must adhere to the ARDA Diver Safety Standard (see Appendix 5). If at any time the diver or the diver's tender declares conditions

to be unsafe, the evaluation is to be suspended and the diver is to be brought up.

- None of the evaluators may drive the boat from which the dogs work or any other boat while evaluating a team.
- The handler will be required to be proficient in the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS). If the handler does not have a GPS, one will be provided.

Detection from a Boat

Rationale

In order to assist authorities in the location of a drowned person, the canine team should be capable of detecting submerged human scent while working from a boat. This portion of the evaluation will assess the canine's ability to detect both submerged live human scent in the form of a diver which simulates a recently drowned victim as well as the scent of submerged human remains material which simulates the scent of an individual who has been submerged in water for an extended period of time.

Course Construction

The canine team will be given three areas to search on a large pond, lake, bay or river. Open ocean is not recommended. Each area will be a minimum of 2 acres and a maximum of 4 acres in size and should be more or less square. Markers will be used to designate the boundaries of each search area. Each area should be separated by a minimum of 150 meters.

Note: 100 meters x 100 meters = 2.5 acres

Scent Source Placement

- Area 1 will be blank and contain no diver or other item in the water that contains human scent in a quantity sufficient to confuse the canine. This area will contain 3 to 5 null or negative distractions such as buoys, flotsam, or bubbles from a submerged free-flowing regulator.
- Area 2 will contain a positive scent source in the form of a diver and 2 or 3 null or negative distractions such as buoys, flotsam, or bubbles from a submerged free-flowing regulator. The diver will be submerged at a depth of 12 to 20 feet at least 10 minutes prior to the team entering the search area. The diver must be able to remain stationary for the duration of the evaluation.

- Area 3 will contain a positive scent source in the form of human remains material and 2 or 3 null or negative distractions such as buoys, flotsam, or bubbles from a submerged free-flowing regulator. The human remains material will be submerged at a depth of 2 to 6 feet at least 30 minutes prior to the team entering the search area. If a scent pump is used, it must be activated at least 10 minutes prior to the team entering the search area.
- As additional distractions, there will be 1 to 3 people along the shoreline or pier adjacent to each of the search areas. These individuals will not talk to or interact with the canine team being tested.
- The location of the positive scent sources will not be known to the testing canine team but must be known to the evaluators and boat driver(s).
- The 3 search areas may be presented in any order.

Conducting the Evaluation

- The evaluators will conduct a briefing in which the handler will be given pertinent information about the search scenario. The evaluators will answer any questions that the handler asks.
- Prior to starting the search task(s), the handler is required to communicate to the evaluators his or her search strategy. The handler is then to execute that strategy. Changes in strategy are permissible; however, the handler is to communicate the reasoning to the evaluators.
- The team will have 30 minutes to search each area. It is preferred that the team move immediately between each area without a break. However, if it is necessary for logistical reasons or diver safety, there may be a short break between moving from one search area to the next.
- The handler is required to direct the boat operator (driver) where and how to run the boat during the evaluation.
- The canine may work on or off-lead.
- The canine should remain in the boat while searching. If the canine falls into the water, it is the responsibility of the handler to be able to get the canine safely back into the boat. Assistance may be given for safety reasons, but the handler should be able to accomplish the task by themselves.
- The handler must indicate to the evaluators the area(s) in which he believes the scent to be strongest, and from that indicate where he believes the positive scent source to be located, taking into account the environmental

conditions, depth of water, tide, and current. The handler is to demonstrate the ability to express the location of the scent source using both triangulation and map coordinates.

Detection from Shoreline

Rationale

In order to assist authorities in the location of a drowned person in an area that is not accessible by boat, the canine team should be capable of detecting submerged human scent while working from the shoreline. This portion of the evaluation will assess the canine's ability to detect submerged human scent while working from the shoreline.

Course Construction

The canine team will be given a shoreline area to search on a large pond, lake, bay or river. Open ocean or any water with surf is not permitted. The area will be a minimum of 300 and a maximum of 500 meters in length. The search area will encompass the shoreline and the water out to a distance of 20 feet from shore. The predominant wind direction must be onshore (blowing towards shore).

Scent Source Placement

- The area will contain a positive scent source consisting of human remains material that is totally submerged in the water. The positive scent source will be placed at a depth of 1 to 3 feet and no more than 20 feet from the shoreline.
- The positive scent source should be placed at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the evaluation.
- If a scent pump is used, it must be activated at least 10 minutes prior to the team entering the search area.
- The area will contain 2 null or negative distractions such as a buoys, flotsams, or bubbles from a free-flowing regulator.
- As additional distractions, there will be 1 or 2 people along the shoreline. These individuals will not talk to or interact with the canine team being tested. They are not to place themselves between the positive scent source and the canine.

- The location of the positive scent sources will not be known to the testing canine team but must be known to the evaluators and boat driver(s).

Conducting the Evaluation

- The evaluators will conduct a briefing in which the handler will be given pertinent information about the search scenario. The evaluators will answer any questions that the handler asks.
- Prior to starting the search task(s), the handler is required to communicate to the evaluators his or her search strategy. The handler is then to execute that strategy. Changes in strategy are permissible; however, the handler is to communicate the reasoning to the evaluators.
- The team will have 30 minutes to search the assigned area.
- The canine may work on or off-lead.
- The canine will not be restricted from entering the water from the shoreline.
- The handler must indicate to the evaluators the area(s) in which he believes the scent to be strongest, and from that indicate where he believes the positive scent source to be located, taking into account the environmental conditions, depth of water, tide, and current. The handler is to demonstrate the ability to express the location of the scent source using both triangulation and map coordinates.

Evaluation Guidelines

Evaluators will consider not only the successful conclusion of the evaluation, but also the following:

Handler Skills

- The handler shall take notes and ask pertinent questions as appropriate to the situation during the initial briefing.
- The handler must develop and execute a good search strategy based on a correct analysis of the situation, the conditions, and the detection capabilities of the canine. The handler must communicate this strategy to the evaluator prior to searching each area.

- The handler must describe the canine's trained indication to the evaluators prior to starting the evaluation.
- The handler must recognize and correctly interpret the behavior of the canine.
- The handler may not coach or assist the canine in the indication.
- The handler must communicate effectively to the evaluators that the canine has indicated a positive scent source.
- The handler must indicate to the evaluator the location of all positive scent sources to within an area that can be considered small for the conditions.
- The handler is to be able to mark the location of each positive scent source to within a small area using triangulation and/or GPS, taking into account environmental influences such as water and air temperature, tide, current, water depth, and wind direction and strength.
- The handler is to be able to relate the pertinent information about each of the tasks performed by the canine team to the evaluator during the debriefing. This is to include a map showing the coverage of the search areas from the handler.

Canine Skills

- The canine will be responsive to handler direction and control.
- The canine must successfully locate and perform its trained indication for each positive scent source.
- The canine must be focused during the search and should continue to search despite common distractions associated with the search environment. Brief registering of interest in a distraction is permissible as long as it does not interfere with the orderly conduct of the search.
- The canine must give a recognizable trained indication to the handler.
- Upon finding each scent source, the canine must give the previously described indication of a find, even if unable to pinpoint the exact location of the source.
- The canine shall not indicate on a null or negative distraction. Calling an indication as a find on a null or negative distraction will result in failure of the test.

Proof of Test

If a team does not locate all of the positive scent sources, the handler has the right to request a demonstration of the validity of the scent sources using a certified water search canine. Said canine should be available within 30 minutes of the request or a “no-test” will be declared.

Recertification

Upon the successful completion of the Water Search Certification Evaluation, the Water Search Canine Search Specialist Team will receive a certificate of completion which will be valid for two (2) years from the date of the certification evaluation. In order to retain this certification the Water Search Canine Search Specialist Team will be required to successfully complete the Water Search Certification Evaluation in its entirety every two (2) years. Once the canine is 10 years old, the Water Search Canine Search Specialist Team must recertify annually.