American Rescue Dog Association
Obedience Assessment
Setup Instructions and Assessment Criteria

Purpose

The purpose of the obedience assessment is to ensure that the canine is reliably obedient to the handler and other search team members under conditions similar to those likely to be encountered at a search scene.

Objective

It is necessary that the canine perform at a level of control sufficient to ensure the safety of the canine, handler, and bystanders at a typical search scene.

Procedures

- The minimum size of the area for the evaluation shall be no less than 120 feet by 75 feet. The area should not contain any hazards or intentional distractions to the canine.

- During the obedience test the handler may not have any type of reward item (e.g., food, toy, etc.) on their person.

- No prong, choke, electronic collars, head halters, or harnesses are permitted during the obedience test – flat collars are permitted.

Elements

1. **People Acceptance and Response to Another Handler –** The handler will "tie out" the dog (*e.g.*, tie lead to a fence or a tree, *etc.*) and leave it in view of the evaluators. The handler will proceed to a designated area out of the dog's sight. After a minimum of 1 minute out of sight, a team member (not a family member or assessor) will un-tie the dog and return it to its handler. The dog must not display any aggressive behavior.

2. **Canine Aggression Testing –** Two posts, each consisting of a handler with dog sitting quietly on lead in heel position, will be placed approximately 8 feet apart facing each other. The handler will complete the Figure 8 pattern, to include a reverse change in direction, with the canine on a loose lead and passing within two (2) feet of each of the post teams. Next, the handler will switch places with one of the post teams and the post team will complete the pattern in the same manner as the handler. The dog(s) being evaluated must remain under control of the handler and display no overt aggression. For the test to be fair, the dogs acting as posts must also remain under control and display no overt aggression to each other or the dog being evaluated.

3. **Heeling in a Crowd –** The handler will heel the dog on "loose" lead, through a scattered group of five (5) milling people. On command "forward" from the assessor, the handler will command the dog to heel. The dog will walk next to the handler, and maintain their position at either side of the handler so as to be attentive to the handler and under their control. At the command "halt" from the assessor, the handler will stop, and the dog will sit. The heeling exercise will include right and left turns, about turns, fast, slow and normal pace. The handler should have the dog's attention at all times. Additional or repetitive commands are acceptable.

4. **Stop on Recall -** The dog shall be placed on a stay command 75 feet (25 meters) from the handler. Upon direction from the evaluator, the handler shall call their dog. The handler will then stop the dog when directed by the evaluator. Once the stop command has been given, an

immediate change in gait is required and the canine must then come to a stop. The dog may drop, sit, or stand and will be judged by the quickness of its response. The handler may give multiple commands. The dog shall remain stationary until released or recalled by the handler at the direction of the evaluator.

5. **Emergency Stop –** The canine will be sent out free to roam. Once the canine is a minimum of 75 feet (25 meters) from the handler the test administrator will command the handler to stop the canine. The canine must stop within 30 feet (10 meters) of the command being issued. The canine may sit, down, stand, etc.

6. **Vehicle Behavior –** A minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 dog/handler teams will get into the open bed of a pick-up truck or equivalent and remain there for 2 minutes. The dog will remain under the handler's control and make no aggressive moves towards another dog or person. The dog's behavior will be assessed and deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the evaluator.

7. **Confinement –** The dog will be put with the handler in a very confined space, such as the floor of the front seat of a car for a period of time long enough for the evaluator to determine whether the dog exhibits acceptable behavior in a confined situation.

8. **Long Stay –** Handlers with their canines in a heel position, will line up 5 feet away from one another. Upon direction from the assessor, the handler shall give the canine the "stay" command and the handler will proceed to a designated area out of the canine's sight. It is ok to leave a leash or pack next to the canine, however, the leash may not be attached to the collar. The canines must be under the supervision of a monitor. Time starts when the assessor states "leave the canine". The canine may sit, stand or shift position, but shall not move more than a body length in any direction from where the canine was placed. After five (5) minutes, the assessor will direct the handlers to return to the canines. Handlers may give a verbal or a hand signal to the canines to stay, if needed, while returning. The exercise is complete when all handlers have returned to their canines and the assessor states "exercise complete". No release will be allowed by any team until the "exercise complete" command is issued.

The assessor should take into consideration the comfort of the canine (e.g., do not choose a place too hot, on anthills, etc.). The exercise will be setup so that the handlers walk away from the dogs from the front as opposed to walking behind the dogs. If a dog breaks the down or becomes overly disruptive, an assessor may quietly lead the dog away from the others.

Note: This element requires the participation of no less than 3 canine teams (to include the testing team). If there are not enough testing teams to meet the 3 dog minimum, non-testing canines, which have already successfully passed the obedience assessment, must be used to meet the 3-dog minimum.

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Date: _____   **Evaluator:** _____

Handler: _____   **Dog:** _____

	Pass	Fail	Comments
1. People Acceptance and Response to Another Handler	☐	☐	
2. Canine Aggression	☐	☐	
3. Heeling in a Crowd	☐	☐	
4. Stop on Recall	☐	☐	
5. Emergency Stop	☐	☐	
6. Vehicle Behavior	☐	☐	
7. High Jump	☐	☐	
8. Confinement	☐	☐	
9. Long Wait	☐	☐	

Additional Comments: _____

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Evaluator Signature: _____