

SPORT: Obedience

Track and Search testing is a new area of tracking, experimenting with different track surfaces and search articles. **Margaret Keast** writes.

LOST & FOUND

The aim of the Track and Search Dog title (TSD) is to advance the dog's skills in tracking, enabling them to find lost people. As such, a variety of surfaces are introduced, the layout of the track changes, the articles change and the method of starting your dog changes.

For TSD tests 1 to 3, the start is similar to that of the Tracking Champion test 7; both have two flags approximately 20 metres apart. However, how your dog finds the start is quite different in the TSD.

The dog must search for the track either off-lead or with the lead attached to the collar rather than the harness. When your dog indicates it has found the track, it must be stopped for you to attach the lead to the harness.

The lead must be attached to the harness before the dog crosses the line between the two start flags. To train your dog to wait for the harness attachment, get it used to pausing on command while tracking. Make sure that these pauses are short, that you praise the dog, and then encourage it to keep track.

Track surfaces

Since the aim here is to simulate a lost person, the surfaces on which the track is laid will vary. The TSD rules state that the surfaces for tests 1 to 3 are to include vegetation, sand, gravel limestone or similar.

While 75 per cent of your training should still be on grass, with all turns on grass, you should also train for variable surfaces. Tracking on surfaces other than grass

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* TIP

When training your dog for the TSD title, place articles on a variety of different surfaces to give it time to get used to moving from one surface to another. The number of articles can be reduced as your dog gains more confidence.



requires more concentration from the dog, and it may move more slowly. Changing from one surface to another is also difficult, so give your dog time to adjust.

Just as when you started tracking, increase the number of articles on the new surface to encourage your dog. The number of these articles can be reduced as your dog gains more confidence.

Search articles

Articles also change for Track and Search. The start article is now a t-shirt, shoe or cap inside a similar plastic bag that is used in Championship Track 7.

Articles on the track should be those likely to have been dropped by lost people – items such as a wallet or purse, a mobile phone, sunglasses, a notebook, a bunch of keys, a soft toy, a shoe or a cap, all of which have been scented by the tracklayer for at least thirty minutes.

The first time that your dog sees such articles it may be tempted to ignore them, as they are not socks. Therefore, once again go back to the techniques used in the early stages of your dog's tracking. Know where the article is and what it is, and encourage your dog to find it.



If necessary place a toy or some tasty food on the article. The rewards can then be reduced when the dog is reliably indicating articles.

Unlike the TD, TDX and Champion tracking tests, there is no requirement to find and/or indicate the articles on the track to obtain a pass.

This is because such articles may have been found and removed by passing people. It is still, however, good practice to encourage your dog to find and indicate the articles, as you have done for your TD, TDX and Championship tracks.

Track laying

The way the track is laid is also different. The track will meander as a lost person would do. Corners are listed in the TSD rules, but may be more serpentine than corners.

The days of tracking in a straight line are gone. Your tracklayer meanders, and so will your dog.

Advantages

In TSD tests, the dog is encouraged to continue its tracking by finding articles along the track.

The sight of the articles along the way also does wonders for the handler's confidence, reassuring them that the dog is not just taking a long walk

So, once you have gained your Tracking Championship, start working on different surfaces, use different articles, pause during a track, and quarter to find the start. ♡