



Working Dog News

SUPPORTING TRAINERS,
HANDLERS, JUDGES AND
REGIONAL CLUBS.

1st Quarter 2026



UPCOMING EVENTS

See what's happening
for [Working Dogs](#).

New Title Debut!

As we head into spring, we are sharing a very exciting new development for this water test season with you today. New Beginner Water Dog Test and Title!

We are so thrilled to announce that The Newfoundland Club of America Working Dog Committee and Board of Directors have approved a new beginner level of water testing. This level can be held at water tests this year! It is an optional titling division just like the BDD division in draft. It is up to the regional clubs to choose to include the division or not.

It is the hope of the Working Dog Committee that all regional clubs will consider adding this to your current water plans, and our goal is to increase participation in our most loved water events nationwide.

Working Dog Forum

BEGINNER WATER DOG WILL BE A TOPIC AT THE WORKING DOG FORUM AT THE NATIONAL, so please come and share your thoughts with the WDC during this first year of implementation!

We're also excited to announce that during the Working Dog Forum we will be including a special presentation from Margaret Clayton and Kristin Julcher on how to teach your dog the Driven Figure 8!

[Sign Up To Attend](#)





Beginner Water Dog - The Background

Seeing the popularity of the Beginner Draft Dog test and receiving requests for a beginner level for water, the Working Dog Committee held discussions as to what a beginner water level could look like and the type of exercises that could be included. We are incredibly excited to be able to develop a level to give those new to the sport of water work a sound foundation and solid achievable goals for beginners.

Since passing the beginner level will earn a title it needed to be grounded in foundational work that will give new water dogs a firm grasp on future skills. We decided that some of the most difficult training for the junior level involved getting dogs to leave their handler and commit to the water to complete the exercises. With this in mind, it was decided that for the beginner level the handler could attach a short, tab leash onto the dead ring of the dog's collar and could gently use that leash as they walked into the water to get the dog started. Handlers have the choice to use the leash, or not, and walk the dog in until they start to swim, then it's hands off and the handler will use voice and hand signals to get the dog to complete the exercise. The handler can wait in the water and meet the dog when the dog returns to just before wading depth and again use the short leash to maintain control when leaving the water. The short leash may not be used to drag the dog into the water or control the dog.

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[Read the Full BWD Regulations](#)

Beginner Water Dog Exercises (summary)

Basic Control: this is done exactly the same as in Beginner Draft Dog. Controlled Walking on leash and a recall on a 15 foot leash provided by the test.

Take, Hold and Give: While on leash the handler tells the dog to take their bumper, the dog must hold the bumper while the judge counts out loud to five. The handler then takes the bumper from the dog. If the dog drops the bumper the handler can instruct the dog to pick it back up and hold it for 5 seconds.

The judge will watch the dog enter the water to judge where wading depth is for the dog.

Single Retrieve: The handler removes the six foot leash and has the option of attaching a short leash to the dead ring of the dog's collar. The handler throws the bumper 30 feet out and then either sends the dog to retrieve it or walks the dog into the water and sends them to retrieve. When the dog returns with the bumper the handler can meet them just before they reach wading depth and take the bumper. The handler may then use the short leash to leave the water.

Drop Retrieve: The handler will choose the article that the dog retrieves; a life jacket or boat cushion. A steward will paddle a canoe or kayak across the test area 40 feet from shore. The steward will splash the article twice on the shore side of the canoe/kayak and drop it. The handler will either send the dog or, using the short leash, lead the dog into the water and send the dog when they start to swim. The dog retrieves the article and returns to just before wading depth where the handler takes the article from the dog. The handler may then use the short leash to leave the water.

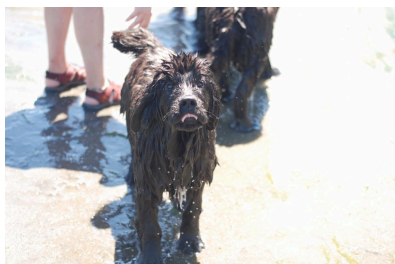
Swim to Steward: A steward will meet the dog and ask its name. The steward then swims out to 40 feet from shore. On the judges signal the steward splashes and calls the dog. The handler will send the dog or lead the dog into the water with the short leash and then send the dog to the steward. The dog does not have to circle the steward, but the dog must get close enough so that the steward can touch the dog's head or body without moving out of position. The steward will signal the judge when they can touch the dog and the exercise is finished. The handler calls the dog back to shore or meets the dog and uses the short leash to take the dog to shore.

Tow A Boat: The handler's eight foot line with bumper attached will be placed in a rowboat. The boat will be positioned facing shore with the bow at 40 feet. A judge will signal the steward in the bow of the boat to splash the bumper and call the dog. The handler may send the dog or using the short leash walk the dog into the water before sending. The dog will take the bumper from the steward and tow the boat towards shore. Just before the dog reaches wading depth the judge will blow the whistle indicating that the exercise is finished and the steward will let go of the line. The handler may be in the water at the dog's wading depth to meet the dog and take the dog to shore. The handler may take the bumper or let the dog carry it to shore.

Swim with Handler: The dog and handler enter the water together and swim out 20 feet together. The handler may use the short leash to enter the water but must release it when the dog starts to swim. The handler may bring a bumper with them to splash in front of the dog or to splash to guide the dog around the handler when turning. The handler may also give the bumper to the dog while swimming out or back to shore. The bumper may not be thrown at any time. When the team reaches 20 feet the judge blows a whistle and the team heads back to shore with the dog towing the handler until the dog reaches wading depth.

FEATURED ARTICLES

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES FROM FELLOW TRAINERS



It's always exciting when I have the opportunity to introduce a young Newfoundland to the water for



Are there actually Newfoundlands that don't know how to swim? More



I would like to start a dialog in our community about what active exercise real-

the very first time. It's a time of great anticipation, as well as an awesome responsibility, to lay the foundation for a working partnership that I hope will last a lifetime. I foresee fun-filled water-test weekends in the puppy's future, made all the more likely by a positive first encounter with the water.

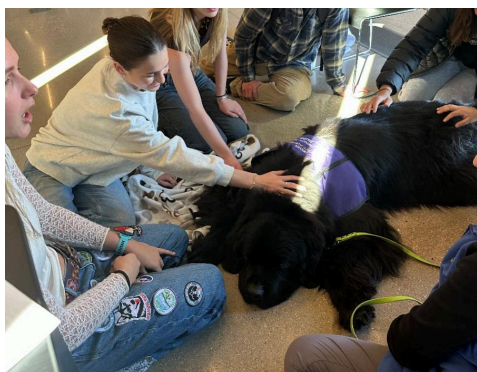
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than likely, all Newfoundlands know how to swim, but there are some that are too afraid or unwilling to try. Granted some Newfs swim better than others by using their legs more efficiently, but all Newfs can swim, naturally, to some extent.

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ly is and if we are doing enough active exercise to achieve our summer goals? One of the topics that comes across in my DMs and that I witness first hand; including my own Newfoundland, is that our dogs are not able to swim without life jackets. In a perfect world, we would not have to worry about this, but for Newfoundlands and Portuguese Water Dog water titles they must compete without a life jacket.

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Patches are "cool" again with the younger generation – Bailey met a college student who proudly displays all hers on her JEANS! Super cute idea!

So what do you do with all yours that you win? Are they displayed proudly in a shadowbox along with your title photo and certificate? Are they on your ringside chair? Are they on your dog's crate? Are they on a flag? Are they turned into an incredible work of art? **SHOW US YOUR CREATIVITY AND YOUR NCA PATCH PRIDE!** Even if they are saved in a ziploc bag to keep them nice, spread them out on your table and send us a pic of them all together! Let your patch pride shine!!

Send Us Pics of Your Patches



Share your passion for working events and put your experience to meaningful use! If you've ever considered giving back to the sport in a deeper way, this is a great opportunity to explore becoming a Working Event Judge.

Join us for an informal and informative Zoom session on April 4 at 6:00 PM Mountain Time. We'll walk through what judging involves, the path to getting started, and how your knowledge and dedication can help support and grow our events for the future.

There's absolutely no obligation—just a chance to learn, ask questions, and see if this rewarding role might be right for you. Sign up to receive the Zoom link and come discover what judging is all about!

Register for the Zoom Call

For Judges

Water Test Judges Please Note!

You will be receiving an invite to a WDC zoom call on June 4 at 6 pm to answer any questions you may have regarding the new Beginner Water Dog division of water work. Please join us!



Thank you to all our judges who have already completed their continuing education regarding Water tests. If you are one of the judges that still needs to complete this portion of your continuing education, please send your exam to Sue Marino prior to the April deadline. Judges must pass the exam to be eligible to judge for the coming test season.

Thank you for your continued sharing of your time and expertise as an NCA Judge!!



For Test Committees

Water Test Committees - please double check your regulations and make sure you are using ALL the side of the beach markers as indicated in the test regulations. We want to ensure that all clubs are placing all markers (including the two markers at the 150 ft sides for X) as required. We know all sites are different and these markers do present some extra work for committees, but they are important for boat stewards to have the line of sight to be correctly positioned, they designate the "out of the test area" for judges, and they give spectators who may approach your test site by watercraft a visual regarding your use of the

area. Thank you!!

Water Test Committees, we appreciate your flexibility this year! Introducing a new level creates a bit of reorganizing at the test level as well. Adding a bit of new timing and new offerings all make for challenges for some test giving clubs. We hope that you consider including the opportunity for entering ALL four levels at your upcoming water tests. Even if you do not have members in your area training, that does not mean that the fancy doesn't have interest in possibly joining you for a test. Please use those tools you have in the regulations to give all our members the widest array of options for water work. It may "float all our boats" across the country! If your committee has questions, please reach out to the WDC regarding these tweaks to your test applications.

Online Entry System

Please make sure your club is using the NCA online entry system for your working events. Using the online system makes it easier to have your dog data tracked for NCA awards, it ensures that all entries are following a standard, it reduces errors from retyping written entry forms, and it assists the test secretary in test material preparation by prefilling catalog information and test record forms.

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AMERICA**
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