

Herding 101

The AHBA Herding Trial Program allows dogs to demonstrate herding ability in herding trials at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels on a standard course and on farm/ranch courses which vary in detail but include specified requirements.

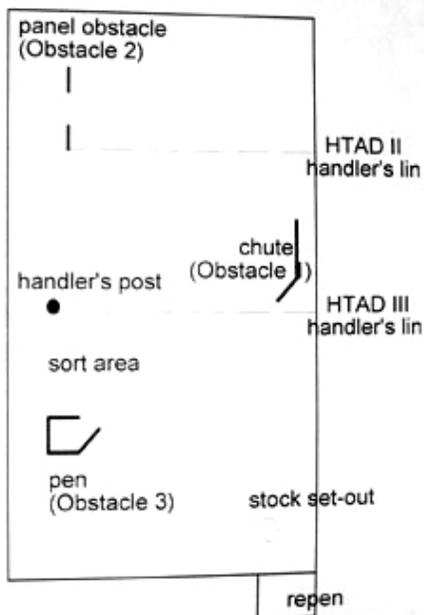
Today we are running the “Herding Trial Arena Dog” trials, using one of several specified courses in an arena. Qualifying leads to the title “HTAD” followed by numerals indicating the dog’s level - started, intermediate or advanced (e.g., HTAD I, HTAD II, HTAD III). Two qualifying runs under different judges are required for a title at each level. These trials will be held on 5 sheep. All levels include an outrun, lift, fetch, wear and/or drive, and pen (the pen may be on the fence for the started level, but is free-standing for the higher levels). At the started level, the outrun is short and the handler may accompany the dog and sheep throughout the course. At the intermediate level, the outrun is longer and the handler may accompany the dog only part way through the course. At the advanced level, the outrun is longer, the handler remains at the handler’s post until time to pen, and after the pen there is an additional exercise (removing a ribbon from a marked sheep).



The course used at the 2008 BMDCA-AHBA Tests/Trials (see graphic at below) starts at the handler’s post located approximately halfway between the North and South ends of the arena, There is a free-standing pen and a Y chute and a panel obstacle. The sorting area is the area roughly between the free-standing pen and the handler’s post.

1. Gather - The stock are let out at the reopen gate and allowed to settle. HTAD I handlers take the dog to a point approximately one-half the distance from the handler’s post to the stock and leave the dog; the handler may move to approximately 15 ft. from the stock and send the dog to gather. HTAD II handlers leave the dog at the handler’s post and move to a point approximately halfway between the post and the stock and send the dog to gather. HTAD III handlers and dogs stay at the handler’s post, and the dog is sent from there to gather the stock. At all three levels the stock are brought to and around the handler’s post, on the side between the post and the Y chute. The Gather ends when the stock have gone just past the handler’s post.

The Herding Capability Test Program is run on a pass/not pass system and leads to the title “Herding Capability Tested” (HCT), where two qualifying scores are required, earned under different judges. Upon completion of the second leg, a certificate will be issued awarding the title. Arena size for HCT tests must be a minimum of 50 x 50 ft., up to approximately 80 x 80 ft. Corners must be rounded;



oval or round enclosures are preferred for first-leg HCT tests. The tester may handle the dog during first-leg tests. For second-leg tests, the owner or owner’s agent must handle the dog, with verbal assistance or brief intervention by the tester being acceptable. In order to pass, dogs must be tested off-lead or with lead dragging in first-leg tests, off-lead in second-leg tests, and may not be held or physically touched by any person or tied to any object. First-leg tests may take the form of a basic instinct test and are fairly free-form, with no set path of travel. Second-leg tests require a more controlled passage from one end of the arena to the other (easily visible markers, such as ribbons or placards, may be placed on the fence at opposite ends of the arena to help indicate direction, or cones may be set on the ground 10 ft. in from the fence at opposite ends of the arena). Each dog’s formal test session shall be a maximum of 10 minutes.

The Junior Herding Dog program, for dogs at the beginning levels of training, is run on a noncompetitive pass/not pass system, and leads

to the title “Junior Herding Dog” (JHD). Two qualifying runs under different judges must be accomplished to award the title. The size of arena for Junior Herding Dog tests should be between 80 x 100 ft. and 100 x 200 ft. for sheep. A panel obstacle is set in approximately the center of the arena, and two panels are set, one at each of the far corners of the arena. The stock (3 to 10 animals) are free-standing in the middle of the short side near the top of the arena, well off the fence. The dog may be brought in on lead, and the handler may gently guide the dog by the collar to a position within no less than 15 ft. of the stock before removing the lead. Off-lead, the dog must hold a stand, sit or down, then is released to gather and/or drive the stock. Throughout the course, the handler may take any position relative to the stock and dog but may not touch the dog once the stock are set in motion. The dog must demonstrate its ability to collect and control stock, put stock in motion, move the stock in straight lines and turns, negotiate obstacles. The stock must be taken through both corner panels and through the center obstacle to qualify and come to a reliable stop at the pen. The stock must be taken through both corner panels and through the center obstacle to qualify. Finally the dog holds the stock in place, while the handler opens the gate to the pen. After the stock have entered the pen, the handler must close the gate; the dog should remain outside the pen. Course time is 8 minutes.

2. Drive - The stock are taken around the pen to a point just in front of the pen gate. Handlers at all levels may accompany the stock to this point. The stock are then driven to the Y chute. HTAD I handlers may accompany the stock and dog, fetching or driving or a combination of both. HTAD II handlers may accompany the stock and dog to a point halfway to the Y chute. HTAD III handlers must remain at the position in front of the pen while the stock are driven to the Y chute. The Drive ends when the stock reach a point 10 ft. in front of the Y chute.

3. Obstacle 1 - The stock are taken through the Y chute. HTAD II and III handlers remain at the designated location until the stock have cleared the Y chute. HTAD I handlers remain at the entrance of the Y chute until the stock have cleared it. Obstacle 1 ends when the stock have cleared the Y chute.

4. Obstacle 2 - Upon the stock exiting the Y chute, HTAD I handlers may fetch or drive the stock through the free-standing panels, Obstacle 2 (none of the handlers may go through the panels). HTAD II handlers must stay on the post side of the handler’s line (which runs across the width of the arena, even with the outside edge of the panel obstacle that is nearest the center of the arena) until the stock have cleared the panel obstacle. HTAD III handlers will remain behind a handler’s line that runs the width of the arena even with the handler’s post until the stock have cleared the panel obstacle. Once the stock have cleared the panel obstacle, the stock are turned to the left and taken to the pen; all handlers may take any position relative to the stock when going to the pen. Obstacle 2 ends when the stock have cleared the panels.

5. Obstacle 3 - The stock are penned in the freestanding pen. Scoring for the pen ends when the pen gate is closed.

6. Sort - The animals are removed from the pen and taken to the sorting area. HTAD I and II handlers briefly hold the stock, then take them to the repen. For HTAD III handlers, the sort will be a ribbon-removal. The Sort ends for HTAD I and II at the conclusion of the hold, and for HTAD III when the gate is closed on the sorted animals, or when the ribbon has been removed.

7. Repen - The stock are taken to the repen and held a short distance off the gate while it is opened, and then they are repenned. When a gate-sort has been used, the animals that had been left out in the arena are repenned. The run ends when the Repen gate is closed.

The score needed to qualify in trials is a minimum of 70% of the total score available (within that total, no scoring section may be zero). Total score available is 90 for HTAD I and II (63 or above qualifying) and 100 for HTAD III (70 or above qualifying). The BMDCA recognizes any title at the Trial level (e.g., HTAD or HTD or HRD, these last two titles have not been discussed here) to qualify for the BMDCA Working Dog Excellent award.