

GENERAL RULES AND DEFINITIONS GOVERNING CERTIFICATIONS

DETECTION CANINES

These certification tests will consist of the following:

- 1) Outdoor, area or vehicle searches – depending on the type of detection certification.
- 2) Indoor searches

GENERAL RULES AND DEFINITIONS

These general rules and guidelines will govern testing unless specifically stated otherwise herein. Rules may be discussed for clarification prior to certification, but no changes will be made prior to the test. All certifications are good through December 31st of the following year. (ie: if you certify on April 1st, 2022, your certification will not expire until December 31st, 2023) If there is a discrepancy between the printed version of the rules and the on-line rules, the on-line rules are to be considered the correct and accurate version. The USPCA, Inc. encourages its regions to offer an annual certification for their members and encourages each member to certify on an annual basis. The regional executive board shall approve all certifications held within their regions.

The substance and weight of the tested substances will be recorded on the master score sheet along with event score sheets. **No pseudo substances can be used on any certification tests.**

1. ASSOCIATION: The term “**association**” when used in the context of these regulations shall refer to the rules committee, the judges committee or the National USPCA Executive Committee.

2. INDIVIDUAL ENTRIES:

A. **Each handler must be a member of the USPCA** and a full-time paid law enforcement officer of a city, town, county, state, or federal agency. The handler must also be a working K-9 officer assigned to a K-9 and duties appropriate to it. Any member who has retired in good standing with a minimum of 10 consecutive years as a member of the USPCA may also certify their trained K-9 if they are working in a part time status for a law enforcement agency and are assigned K-9 duties. This would also apply to any full retired member who is a reserve, special deputy, or any status where the member is still recognized as a law enforcement officer. The member must maintain continuous membership with the USPCA upon retirement. If their membership is not continuous, they will not be eligible to certify their canine.

B. A special member as defined in the by-laws may certify a dog in a regional detector trial if approved as a special member by their region.

1. Non-Law Enforcement/Peace Officers: This Association will offer DETECTOR certifications only to all NON-Law Enforcement/peace officer individuals. There will be no membership required for the certification and the participants will not be eligible for any of the benefits of this Association. Such certification will consist of our current detector certifications. This certification will not be held in conjunction with any USPCA certification trial. The cost, time, frequency, and location of these certification events will be established and controlled by

the National Executive Board. The National Executive Board will have full control of all non-Law Enforcement/Peace Officer Detector certifications for these individuals.

C. Regular members wishing to certify in a national detector trial must have certified in a sanctioned regional certification to be eligible for the nationals. This means they must have certified in a trial since the end of the last national detector trial to the beginning of the next national detector trial.

*Game, Cadaver, Arson are excluded. National detector dog registration forms will ask the handler to declare the date and location of the last detector dog trial that the canine team attended.

D. Certifications will not be permitted for the purpose of marketing or selling dogs.

E. Testing order will be drawn prior to the test and is at the Chief Judge's discretion, as is scheduling of participants at each location or venue.

F. For National Certifications, each handler is allowed to enter only one dog and it must be a dog used in the performance of the K-9 Officer responsibilities.

3. TEAM ENTRIES

A. An agency or department may enter as many teams as they like, consisting of two members who are working for the same agency or department for National Certifications.

B. Each Region/district may enter as many teams as they like, consisting of two members who are primary members with that region/district, forming a region/district team for National Certifications. See E below concerning regional/district certifications.

C. Participants comprising a team must be announced to the officials at the handlers meeting and each handler may only participate on one team, either a region/district team or a department team. All participants on a team must be certifying in the same discipline. (i.e. all narcotics, or all explosives)

D. Teams wishing to designate an alternate team member must do so at the handler meeting. If during the certification, a designated member of the team cannot continue, the alternate member's scores will be considered for the overall team score.

E. Regions and/or districts may establish entry criteria for participating teams if teams (optional) are established.

4. JUDGES AND JUDGING:

A. All judges for Regional, District and National certification tests must be active regular or associate members of the USPCA and must have handled or trained a detector dog. The Chief Judge for a **National** Detector Dog Certification must be a Nationally Certified Detector Dog Judge and a **National trainer**. *Approved 11-9-2025. The Chief Judge for a **Regional** or District Detector Certification must be a **regional or national USPCA certified detector judge AND must be either a National Trainer OR at least a Detector dog Trainer. (Note continuation of existing policy for non-trainers approved by committee to chief judge)** *Approved 11-9-2025. *See Chief Judges requirements found online.* The National Detector Trial will have five nationally certified detector judges on each event (high and low score discarded). A regional trial will have a minimum of three judges with all scores counted or a maximum of five judges (high and low discarded) on each event.

Minimum qualifications for a detector judge at a regional trial are:

1. A detector dog trainer.
2. Or a person who has certified a detector dog with the USPCA.
3. Has served as a non-scoring judge in at least one detector dog certification if possible.

NOTE: Region and District Certifications should have at least one certified judge for each event.

- B. The Chief Judge at the National Detector Certification Trials shall not judge. The Chief Judge is there to oversee the complete operation of the certification including judging, scoring, and stewards. Once the testing has started, it shall be the chief judge's responsibility to make all final decisions regarding the completion of the trials, such as factors caused by weather, time schedules, etc.
- C. The Chief Judge at Regional/District certifications shall have the same responsibilities but may be a scoring judge if needed. The Chief Judge for a regional/district trial may be from within that same region or district. The Chief Judge for a National Trial must be from outside the host region/district.
- D. The Chief Judge will be responsible for the fair and equal method of testing for all participants. All judges on each event will be responsible to see that their event is run according to the rules and regulations of the association. The lead judge on the event will set guidelines to promote consistency of rule application and penalties.
- E. The Chief Judge will determine the scope of the vehicle search phase. i.e. – exterior only, or exterior and interior.
- F. CHIEF JUDGE for NATIONAL TRIALS - The Judges Committee shall appoint all judges for National Trials. The Chief Judge for any National Trial shall be from an outside region and not the region hosting the event and shall be appointed based on recommendations from both the Judges Committee and the host agency. An individual may not serve as Chief Judge for a Patrol (PDI) National Trial if they have served as Chief Judge at a National PDI Trial within the previous three (3) years. An individual may not serve as a Chief Judge for a National Detection Trial if they have served as a Chief Judge at the National Detection Trial within the previous three (3) years. The National PDI and National Detector Trials are independent of each other, so two lists will be created and maintained. (by the Judges Committee chair) This rule change shall apply retroactively for a period of three (3) years from its effective date. *May 2026
- G. Judges are not required to explain their scoring and CANNOT enter into any discussions with a member who appears dissatisfied. Any interested person, who thinks there has been a mathematical error or an error in identifying a dog, may report the fact to one of the officers of the Association or the certification officials. Judges should explain point deductions on the score sheets whenever possible.
- H. Scores will be considered unofficial until checked and officially released by the chief scorekeeper and Chief Judge. Scorekeepers will not change a judge's score sheet unless it is an obvious mathematical error and then only after the error has been confirmed by the judge and chief judge. Judges and Scorekeepers will not discuss scores with competitors at a National Event until the scores are officially released. Judges and Scorekeepers will be subject to sanctions or suspension if found in violation of discussing scores with a competitor. On completion of an event the Chief Judge or chief scorekeeper will release the judges.
- I. No judge shall require a dog or handler to do anything, nor shall they penalize a dog or handler, for failing to do anything not required by these rules.
- J. Judges must carry a mental picture of a theoretically perfect performance in each exercise and score each dog and handler against this visualized standard, which shall combine the utmost in willingness, enjoyment, and precision on the part of the dog, and the naturalness, gentleness, and smoothness of the handler. Lack of willingness or enjoyment on the part of the dog must be penalized, as should a lack of precision in the dog's performance or roughness in handling.
- K. Members of the rules and judges' committees cannot rule on protests of their own department. The committee ruling on protests shall consist of three or more odd number members as selected by the Chief Judge. See 6.F.
- L. There will be no penalty of less than one-half (1/2) of a point.

M. If a dog fails in a particular part of an exercise, it shall not ordinarily be re-judged or given a second chance unless so stated in these rules. But, if in the opinion of the judges, the dog's performance was prejudiced by peculiar circumstances, the judges may, at their discretion, re-judge the dog on the entire exercise, or that portion of the exercise, that the dog failed.

N. No national scoring judge shall compete or participate in the National Trials other than in a judging capacity – i.e., this person cannot be a competitor or a decoy.

5. STEWARDS—OPTIONAL:

A. There can be two types of stewards for each event: "Field and "Test."

1. **Field Stewards** will direct the teams to any staging area and keep the next testing team ready to perform certification when summoned. This steward will check equipment and support logistics as needed. This steward works at the direction of the chief judge or senior event judge.

2. **Test Stewards** will work at the direction of the senior event judge and conduct details as delegated. *NOTE: There will be no lengthy or unnecessary delays by either stewards or certifying teams. (see 7.A & B)* In some cases, the judge may act as a steward and judge.

6. TEST REQUIREMENTS:

A. All aids used in testing shall be kept in separate containers to avoid cross contamination. All substances will be placed so they cannot be retrieved by the canine.

B. All handlers will be tested in their standard department duty uniform with the exception of foot apparel or any equipment that will conflict with rule 6D. Baseball hats may be worn if they are professional in appearance. Plain-clothes officers can be tested in civilian clothes if that is the accepted-on duty apparel. Numbered vests may be provided for ease of identification and required when provided.

C. During testing, handlers will not carry any rewards that are contaminated with any substance. Dry dog food, sterile rewards and/or sterile toys may be used during testing. The Association can opt to supply the rewards and/or toys.

D. No whistles, ultrasonic devices or related aides not specifically stated herein will be allowed. Spike or pinch collars are permitted. All these devices must be left in the parking lot. A dummy collar or non-operational electronic collar shall be allowed. Prior to entering the testing field, a field steward will check the K9's E-collar to ensure that the devise is a dummy collar or that it is shut off. The competitor will also hand the remote to the steward prior to the exercise.

E. All certifications will permit the handler the flexibility of working the dog on or off lead, or a combination of both.

F. Protests: The committee ruling on protests shall consist of three or more odd number members as selected by the Chief Judge. Members of the rules and judges' committees cannot rule on protests of their own department. Handlers will advise the steward at the time of occurrence or immediately after the test or phase (before leaving the field) that a protest may be entered or lodged. The steward will note the protest and scoresheets will be marked that a possible protest may be filed. All formal protests will be lodged in writing to the Association (Chief Judge), identified by the team's number only, (no name) before they are considered. Any potential disqualification (DQ) from testing will be considered (as a DQ or not a DQ) by the protest committee. Protests and disqualifications must consider the rules of this Association and be ruled on accordingly. Written protests should be kept and submitted to the National Secretary by email and should indicate the protest committee's names and the outcome of the protest. In the case of a question concerning rules, the Chief Judge

should contact the Judges Committee Chairman. *Approved 5-7-23 in Evansville

No dog will be left unattended at any time in such a manner as to create a danger or hazard to any other dog, person or to itself.

G. Each handler will be responsible for any damage done by his or her K-9.

H. There will be no training or practice in the area of the trials or other locations where it may disturb the normal tranquility of fellow teams or citizens not involved with or participating in the certification.

I. The certification is for the team—handler and dog. If the dog has multiple handlers, each handler must certify as a team with the dog. In this event new hides will be made when certifying additional handlers.

J. ***Any extreme or abusive correction or treatment of a dog—loss of temper or display of poor sportsmanship by the handler—will result in disqualification from the certification as determined by the Chief Judge.*** The Executive Board may undertake its own investigation and take any action it deems appropriate based on the totality of the circumstances.

7. HANDLER'S PREPARATION:

A. There will be no lengthy explanation of the exercise while the certifications are conducted. It is the handler's responsibility to know what he or she must do on each exercise.

B. A handler, who is familiar with these rules, should be able to enter the test area under any judge without having to inquire as to how the particular judge wishes to have the exercise performed and without being confronted with some unexpected requirement.

Teams failing to successfully certify will not immediately be given a second chance. Multiple tests of the same team will not be conducted. The team must undergo a period of retraining, documenting successful performance, before any attempt at re-certification. Only official Certificates of Certification (Provided by the National Office) will be issued to participants who successfully pass a USPCA Certification test.

8. DEFINITIONS:

- **Response**—This is the action of the dog when put in the scent cone of the substance.
- **Alert**—This is the behavior, physical and / or verbal, that the dog is trained to exhibit when the dog encounters the odor of a substance. Evaluation will be based on the degree of indication and the handler's / judge's ability to recognize that behavior. The indication and degree should be obvious to the judges.
- **Find**—The handler will call the location of the target substance as narrowly and as precisely as possible. An indication that is not precise to location, but the judge feels is in odor can receive partial points in the Find section. The judge's decisions are final. All indications of the concealed substances by the dog must be obvious.

9. TIME KEEPING:

The time allotted to each exercise will depend on the certification test. See specific tests for the allotted time.

A. The team will start from a point designated by the chief judge outside the test area. Time will start when the dog or handler leaves this point. Time will stop when the handler indicates that his search is complete, or time expires. The handler will call the location of the substances at this time.

B. If multiple rooms are involved (such as in narcotic/explosive tests), time will stop between the rooms but no unnecessary delays will occur between rooms. Time may stop or start at the direction of the senior judge who will announce time has stopped or has been restarted.

C. The set-up time will vary depending on the certification test. In each certification the target items will be placed a minimum listed time before the first handler & dog team.

10. LOCATION of TARGETED SUBSTANCES:

The tested substance in all detector certifications will be placed with the dual purpose of: *being in a practical location*, and *testing the dog's ability to locate the tested odor and the ability of the handler to interpret the dog's alert*. For inside room searches, no hide may be higher than six (6) feet from the ground or floor.

11. PROFESSIONALISM—CERTIFICATION:

A. This is a certification test, not a competition, scored under artificial conditions with equal difficulty for each team. The purpose is for certification and training. Points are awarded and reflect a scale of performance on the exercises. Lower scores encourage improvement of training methods and ideas. It is the sharing of those methods and ideas that create continual improvement of the canine team's performance.

12. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Except for the AREA SEARCH PHASE in cadaver testing, any K-9 relieving itself in the working areas during testing will be penalized once for 10 points in that phase. Multiple incidents will be penalized ½ to 2 points as minor deductions taken off work points.

B. There will be no consumption of alcoholic beverages on or in the area of the testing site during testing hours by judges, handlers or participating officials.

C. In the event of any ties at the National Detector Trial, the team that uses the least time will place higher.

D. Handlers of canines that do an aggressive indication will take reasonable care not to allow their dogs to damage property unnecessarily.

E. Handlers who have been tested will not converse with a team waiting testing in their group. Hides are confidential until that day's testing is completed.

F. For maximum points, the K9 team should do a complete search of the testing areas. I.E.- All vehicles should be searched regardless of whether two hides have already been located. All rooms – the entire room, should be searched regardless of whether the two hides were located or not. Packages – All packages should be searched regardless of whether two hides were located or not. *Approved 11-9-2025

F. A non-participating handler and dog will be walked through the test area prior to the first team to contaminate the area. This handler will touch room interiors and vehicles.

G. All score sheets will be mailed or given to participants after the completion of the trials.

Chief Judges are responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the paperwork.

Upload or email completed trial paperwork or program to include: (within 30 days of the trial)

- Original Master score sheet
- Judges and Scorekeepers list with events judged.
- The high-low sheets showing the scores of all judges.
- Trial paperwork including the scoring program should be uploaded on the web site, www.uspcak9.com and look under the CERTIFICATION tab.

Email : **National Secretary Melinda Ruopp**
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