



Carriage Dog Trials General information

These notes give competitors an idea of what to think about and what to expect when taking part in a Carriage Dog Trial. They cover aspects of health and safety, timings for the day, the endurance course and vet checks. Competitors should refer to Guidelines for Competitors for more help on specific elements of the trials, including the obedience tests, judging and scoring.

Most trials take place on private land and competitors are asked to respect the fact that the landowners go out of their way to make it possible for the trials to take place. We aim to leave the facilities and grounds in the condition that we find them.

Health and safety

The safety and welfare of those organising, running and participating in the trials is a priority for the society, as is the safety and well-being of dogs and horses.

There is a health and safety policy covering the trials and officers responsible for implementing this will be made known to you. They will have completed a risk assessment for the event and you will be advised of any specific points at the pre-trials briefing.

As a competitor you are required to provide proof of equine third party insurance with entry and to obtain confirmation from your insurance company that your dog has public liability insurance for the competition.

Competitors are strongly advised to attend the pre-trial briefing. Information about this will be provided in the letter you receive in advance of the competition. At this briefing you will be given trial specific information including details of potential hazards on the endurance course. The judge will also brief you on what they will be looking for in the obedience exercises and you will have the opportunity to study the layout of the course. **Missing this briefing may well prejudice your chances of being successful in the trials.** Regrettably organisers will be too busy to give individual briefings to late-comers.

Please note that appropriate footwear should be worn at all times when handling horses – at the equestrian vet check, during the trials as well as at other times around the stables and when turning out your horse. Safety helmets must be worn at all times when riding or on a carriage.

You will need a competitor number for the trials. This will be provided by the course steward who is usually based at the endurance course start point. Alternatively, it may be passed to you at the pre-trials briefing. This competitor number usually has an emergency telephone

number on the back that you should call in the event of an emergency out on the endurance course. You may also be provided with a contact card of telephone numbers for the event including this emergency number. It makes sense to put the emergency number in your phone's memory.

Timings

On the day of the trials you should take your dog to the initial vet check at your appointed time. You may wish to consider the nature of the vet examination and acclimatise your dog to a veterinary check prior to the trials.

At national events all horses, including companion mounts, doing 20 km or over will also be checked by an equestrian vet immediately after the dogs. Bronze horses do not need to be checked. Note: Hoof oil should not be used. Please note all companion riders are also required to have safety checks.

About ten minutes before your warm up start time you should report to the course steward at the start. There will be a safety check of your tack or turnout at this point. The capability of the driven horse to pull the load asked of it will also be checked.

You will then continue to the area designated for warming up. From there you will proceed to the obedience field at your given time. Companion riders are not allowed on the obedience field and will need to wait by the start in order to join you on the endurance course.

Your obedience exercises and speed test will take approximately 15 minutes. When you finish each exercise you should know if you have passed or failed it, although you will not be given your scores. These will be given out at the end of the trials. If the judge does not tell you if you have passed, please ask them, although you are not allowed at this stage to ask any more specific questions. You will then have a set time in which to complete the endurance course, depending on your level of entry.

The endurance course

The endurance section of the trials will be almost entirely off road. There maybe a few sections of the course that include quiet lanes. These will be clearly marked and possibly stewarded.

The course is usually ten kilometres in length. Every kilometre will be marked. Bronze competitors will complete one circuit of the course, silver, two circuits, and gold competitors will complete four circuits. Your horse or turnout should be fit to cover the distance required at your level.

There are two check-points on the course and both will have water, buckets and sponges. In the case of extreme weather there will extra un-stewarded water points. Check point stewards are allowed to assist you with your dogs and horses.

There is usually a mix of carriage drivers and riders taking part in the trials. It is not possible to keep the two entirely separate. Riders should be prepared to encounter horses and carriages. Before attending the trials it is worth acclimatising your ridden horse to horse drawn carriages, and all horses to dogs running with bells. Please also understand that

carriage drivers like to trot uphill! Carriage drivers should be mindful of the fact that ridden horses are often spooked by horses pulling carriages. Steward transport may be on the course some of the time.

If you wish to canter please only do so when you have good visibility ahead.

If you meet other competitors on the course please call your dog(s) to hock or to axle immediately.

Time allowed

Level of award	Distance	Maximum time allowed
Bronze	10 km	1 hour 30 mins
Silver	20 km	3 hours
Gold	40km	6 hours

You are allowed two minutes at each of the water points on the course to adjust harness or tack, and water your horse and dog. Please note that the clock does not stop. You will not qualify your dog if you do not complete the course in the allotted time. Bring your stop watch!

Midpoint vet check

All silver and gold competitors will have a midpoint vet check for horses and dogs. You may leave a snack for your dog here and water will be available. Stewards may help you attend to your

horse but you must attend to your dog yourself and the stewards are not allowed to help you do this.

Dogs will be vetted to see if they are fit to continue. A rest period of at least five minutes and no more than 30 minutes will be directed by the vet. The vet check time is included in this. You must stay in the midpoint rest area for this time. Following this the clock starts running again. If you are told to rest your dog for the maximum 30 minutes you will receive the minimum vet score of 50 points. Dogs which are deemed unfit to continue will be disqualified.

Gold and silver horses will also be checked at the mid point and need to be passed as fit to continue. If your horse is held for longer than the allotted time you will incur penalty points for your dog.

Final vet check

After crossing the finish line the vet will again check your dog and award up to 200 points for its condition. You may ask the vet to inform you if you have passed or failed the vet check.

Please stay in the box allocated to you until released and be prepared to return to the vet at a specified time.

Gold and silver horses will also be vetted again. You are allowed to substitute your horse if necessary. The equestrian vet has the authority to eliminate a competitor should any horse's condition warrant it. The vet may choose the best conditioned horse to receive an award at some events.

At this point you should know if you have passed in all the areas of judging although you will not know your scores.

Please do not hesitate to ask any of the organisers should you have any queries.

We hope you enjoy the event. Please remember that the organisers and all stewards are volunteers!