

DOG SCOUTS OF AMERICA

TrailDog

Official Guidebook



FOR DSA SANCTIONED TRAIL DOG TITLING

Date: 3/25/2011

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DSA TrailDog Guidebook

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Note: We are currently working on expanding our TrailDog program to include DSA-Sanctioned events, further titling opportunities, and more training information. We will continue the current PackDog titling system, and plan to expand it to include hiking without pack and other possibilities. Stay tuned!

Dog Scouts of America
www.dogscouts.org

About Backpacking With Your Dog:

Any size or shape of dog can enjoy backpacking. There are several things to consider before you engage in this great new activity:

- Choosing the right pack for your dog
- Conditioning yourself and your dog for exercise
- Getting the items you will need to carry in your pack
- Keeping a log of your miles hiked



Important Safety Information

Just like any other physical activity, you will want to prepare yourself and your dog for the new strain on the muscles which may not have been used regularly. Start out slowly, walking only a mile or less the first day. Slowly build on the distance you will cover on your hikes. Remember to stretch your muscles (your dog's too) before exercising. When you start having your dog carry his pack, start with it empty, and add weight gradually each trip.

Before making a big change in your dog's activity level, it's a good idea to consult with your veterinarian.

Selecting Equipment

Choosing the right pack for your dog

Dogs can carry a good deal of weight on their backs, which is helpful in trekking across country, as your dog can then lighten your load by carrying his own provisions at the very least. It is important to place the weight which your dog will carry over the shoulder blade (withers) area, and not in the middle of the back. The shoulders are built to carry the weight--the spine is not. This is especially important in long-backed breeds. Get a pack which places the weight over the dog's shoulders.

If your dog's pack is loaded, and he is doing any kind of climbing, uphill walking or pulling, you will want to be sure to have a non-restrictive harness on your pack. Non-restrictive means that the dog's shoulder movement (point of shoulder) is not impeded by any kind of horizontal strap across the front. A non-restrictive pack would have a harness hook-up which goes over the dog's head like a sledding harness, comes to a "V" at the hyoid bone, and continues down between the dog's front legs. This allows the pulling pressure to go on the middle of the dog's chest, and not on the forelegs, which would restrict his movement. Get a pack which is non-restrictive.

Whether you want padding or not on your pack depends on the weight and the amount of pulling your dog will do. It will also depend on what type of coat your dog has. A short coated breed would benefit more from a padded harness if there will be a lot of rubbing of the pack. Padding is usually in the form of polar fleece or fake lamb's wool. Some packs are padded under the saddlebags, and some are padded around the neck and chest areas of the harness.

Color is a matter of personal preference, but remember that your dog will be in the woods, and a high visibility color, like orange, yellow, or red will help you (and others) spot your dog from a distance, without mistaking him for a game animal.

Packs should be made from a light-weight, water-proof material, with adjustable nylon web straps and quick-snap buckles for ease in getting on and off.

You can order a Dog Scout backpack from Dog Scouts of America. This is a non-restrictive, adjustable, light-weight pack, which has removable saddlebags. Kelty packs are also available in the Dog Scout store and are non-restrictive and light weight.

Getting the items you need for your pack

There are various clubs which offer titles for backpacking. Some are breed clubs for specific dogs (like Malamutes). Each one has different requirements as to what must be carried in your pack and what percentage of the dog's total body weight must be carried to qualify for their titles. If your breed has a backpacking title program, contact your national breed club for rules and requirements. I will outline the requirements for attaining titles on all breeds (and mixes) through Dog Scouts of America. This organization will confer titles on your dog, provided you pack along the necessary items in your dog's backpack. These items include: first aid kit, water, bowl, spare collar and leash, matches, knife, at least three baggies (for clean-up), compass, flashlight, owner's I.D. , a signal device (mirror, whistle or cell phone) and map of the area (if needed).

Training and Conditioning

There aren't many instructions necessary for backpacking. If the dog will walk on a leash and wear a pack, the dog can do backpacking.

Any time you put something new on a dog (like a head collar), you want to create a favorable association with the new thing. When you first try the pack on the dog, place it across his back like a saddlebag and give him treats. Next, connect the harness straps and give treats. Next require that he actually WALK while wearing this apparatus (more treats).

To make the pack more comfortable for your dog, make sure you distribute the weight evenly between the two saddlebags. This can be done the easiest way by carrying two smaller water bottles, instead of one bigger one. By having two containers, water can be shifted from one side to the other to keep the pack perfectly balanced.

Make sure you and your dog are in condition for the hike you plan to take. At camp, we start with a short hike, and do gradually longer ones each day. Stretch your muscles before any physical activity, and stretch your dog's muscles with some brief exercise or some range-of-motion stretching.

PackDog Titling Requirements

Standard PackDog Utility Titles:

PD - 50 miles, including one 5-mile day hike

PDX - 100 miles, including one 10-mile day hike

UP - 200 miles, including two 10-mile day hikes

[More activities and titles to come....]

Logging your miles – Pack dog titles

Each time you pack a mile or more with your dog, keep track of the distance, location and date. You will also need to have your hiking buddy (if you have one) sign your log sheet. If you don't hike with a buddy, then you should notify someone that cares about you that you are going on a walk. Tell them exactly what route you plan to take and when you are expected to return. Then notify them when you return. This person should attempt to contact you or send out a search party if you do not contact them after your walk. This person can sign your log sheet for the hikes you did alone (while accompanied by your dog of course). When you have logged 50 miles with your dog carrying his backpack with all of the required items, you can do a check-out hike, which is a 5-mile hike. A forest ranger, Dog Scout Camp Director, Dog Scout backpacking evaluator or other official needs to sign your log sheet. Then you will be eligible to receive the Pack Dog title from Dog Scouts of America. Once your log is checked and approved, your dog can use the title of Pack Dog (the initials PD after the dog's name.)

For the next level of the title, the dog needs to carry his loaded pack for an additional 50 miles (at least one mile at a time). The check-out hike for this level is 10 miles (within 10 hours). Once the log is checked and approved, the dog can use the title of Pack Dog Excellent (the letters PDX after the dog's name).

The final level is an additional 100 miles (200 total miles plus the check out hikes). The check out for this level is two separate 10 mile hikes (each completed within 10 hours). Once the log is checked and approved, the dog can use the title Utility Pack Dog (the letters UPD after the dog's name.)

Note: DSA does allow small dogs to be carried when needed. Handlers that are not able to walk the required distances can use alternate means as long as it is safe for the dog to move alongside (the dog still needs to do the hiking). A golf cart, 4 wheeler, or powered wheel chair are examples of "alternate means". Since it is the dog that is getting the title, substitute handlers are allowed.

DSA-Sanctioned TrailDog Events

[More to come]

DSA-Sanctioned TrailDog Events

[More to come]

Registration and Entry

Registering with DSA, Entry Eligibility

All dogs submitting for PackDog titles, and any future TrailDog titles, must be registered with DSA. See the Forms section in this guidebook for a DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Form, or the Competition & Titling page on the DSA website.

Current DSA members will be “grandfathered” into the program—for those dogs whose handlers were DSA members and began logging miles prior to January 1, 2011, no CRN is required. You may choose to submit your DSA member number in place of a CRN.

DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Forms must be mailed with the proper fee payment, or if available, purchased and submitted online. Allow at least 2-3 weeks for the form to reach DSA and to be processed.

DSA CRN numbers are emailed to legible email addresses for all forms, when received and processed. If there are any questions regarding filling out DSA CRN forms, contact DSA (See the Contact Us page on the DSA website for PackDog, TrailDog, and DSA Competition & Titling contact info.)

Updating Your DSA CRN Information:

Send address, phone, email, or other changes to DSA by mail or email, and include \$5 per dog for processing.

*** See the Contact Us page on the DSA website to find contact information for staff handling PackDog, TrailDog, and Competition & Titling inquiries. ***

Event Entries & Check-in Procedures

A general liability waiver will be a standard part of the entry forms for DSA-sanctioned PackDog events.

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Library of TrailDog Forms



The forms on the following pages may be reproduced from this book, or can be obtained online along with other PackDog/TrailDog information at www.dogscouts.org.



DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Form

Complete a separate registration form for each dog you are registering. Each dog needs only one CRN to compete in any and all DSA competitions. **Please print clearly or type** – this information will appear on all DSA Competition & Titling records. Registration confirmation will be emailed to you. If you do not have email, it will be sent via US mail. Please allow 2-4 weeks for processing.

Handler Name (s): _____

Address: _____

e-mail address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Dog Name: _____

Breed: _____

Birthdate: _____ Gender: _____ Altered: _____

Height at Shoulder: _____ Approximate Weight: _____

If you have previously registered with DSA, list the first 6 digits of your CRN: _____

Fees:

DSA CRN Registration	\$35.00	_____
Less Spay/Neuter Discount (enclose proof)	-\$5.00	_____
If this is the 3rd (or greater) dog being registered in this household	-\$5.00	_____
Less DSA Member Discount	-\$10.00	_____
(Member Number/ Exp Date _____)		
Printed copy of _____ Rulebook (optional)	+\$10.00	_____
* Rulebooks and guidebooks are available free online at DSA website		
Total		_____

Payment Information

Make check or money order payable to DSA (in US funds drawn on U.S. Banking institutions.)

Mail to: **Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann**
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241



Submission Form for TrailDog / PackDog titles:

Person's Name(s):* _____

Dog's Name:* _____

** Please include names as you would like them to read on your certificate.*

Mailing Address: _____

Dog's CRN Number: _____

Title Achieved: PD / PDX / UP / _____

Date: _____

[Attach mileage log. Please include copies of the log sheets (or the certificate) for previously completed levels.]

For PD: Date of 5-mile day hike: _____

For PDX: Date of 10-mile day hike: _____

For UP: Date of first 10-mile day hike: _____

Date of second 10-mile day hike: _____

Mail this form, a COPY of the dog's mileage log, and a \$25 recording fee (payable by check or money order made out to "DSA") to:

***Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241***

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