

Introduction

This guidance document has been compiled from extensive interviews given by current and experienced protected stewards (PS), Patrol Dog Stake judges and Trials Managers. Their assistance is very much appreciated.

It is not intended as regulated instructions – the Kennel Club I Regulations include these and should always be adhered to. This document simply acts as advice and guidance with the aim to provide more understanding of the role of the PS.

Whilst this guidance is primarily aimed towards new PS, it may also be helpful to PS from other dog sports as well as judges, competitors, trials managers and anyone with an interest in working trials or patrol work.

Patrol rounds couldn't happen without the crucial role of the PS. Unlike other dog sports which require their PS to be licensed, there is no such official Kennel Club policy. However it is recognised by all that the training of PS should be thorough and carried out by those with a high standard of knowledge and experience. The aim is to ensure that all PS have a good understanding of what is required and an ability to carry out each exercise safely and competently. PS training courses are sometimes available and present the opportunity to learn skills, build knowledge and engage in discussions, in an organised format.

Full, expertise knowledge of the KC Rules & Regulations in respect of the Patrol round is not essential however it is important to have a good understanding of the Patrol round exercises, what is expected of the dog and handler and what the judge requires from each exercises.

Initial Training and Understanding

A PS must have a good understanding of dogs and basic dog training experience. They should have a sympathetic attitude, common sense, good timing and intuition as well as be able to follow the judge's instructions. All PS should have watched patrol rounds prior to taking part for the first time. The PS is responsible for their own safety and the dogs' safety. They require to have the confidence to say to the judge whether they are not happy about something and have the knowledge to discuss it. They are responsible for carrying out the test within the rules.

Previous/initial training should include awareness and understanding of:

Different breeds characteristics

Experience of working different breeds of dogs

Understanding the different variations and styles of dogs

How dogs read a person's body language, eye line and attitude

The requirement to be impartial.

There is a requirement not to act macho, to not dominate the dog but treat the dog sympathetically and bring out the best of the dog. They should consider their situation if they did not have the

protection of a sleeve – how would they treat or react to the dog. All dogs must be treated the same and with safety in mind.

Dogs competing in PD are highly trained; it's not a competition to see who has the hardest dog. Consistency is important and required to allow the judge to mark the dog fairly. Respect the dogs and have respect for the time taken to train the dogs to this standard. There is a balance to be struck between the test and being able to show off the dogs ability.

When acting as a PS, there are some ground rules with regards how best to manage the dog and the patrol test -

Always have the sleeve between the PS and the dog.

The PS should, in their mind, practice for any eventuality.

No dog should be put in a position to be injured, fearful or worried.

Prior to the trial

When contacted prior to the trial (by the judge or trials manager) the PS should be provided with the initial details of the trial and patrol round, i.e. location and date. It may be that equipment, sleeve types and sleeves availability are also discussed.

This is also an opportunity to make the Trials Manager/Judge aware of any restrictions in the PS's capabilities. It is recognised that the PS may not be able to undertake every patrol round exercise or role, possibly due to age, fitness or lesser experience or knowledge. It is imperative that a PS undertakes a role they are comfortable in and able to carry out professionally and capably. It is also imperative therefore that they advise the TM/Judge of any such restrictions at the earliest opportunity.

On arrival at the trial

In the Patrol Stake, judges must familiarise themselves with the experience and knowledge of the protected stewards assisting, and discuss fully with them the roles required in the patrol round. Feedback and discussion from the PS must be encouraged and the PS must have the confidence and sufficient knowledge to engage properly. It is essential that the PS has a clear understanding of their role in each exercise. There may be situations that happen dynamically on the field and the PS has to think for themselves. A good PS should also make themselves aware of what is happening throughout the patrol round, even if they are not directly involved in that exercise. Whilst they are mainly responsible for their own safety and that of the dog; awareness and the safety of all others in the field is also a consideration.

It is important that they understand their responsibility for their own safety, others taking part and the dogs competing. They must be confident to decline to take part in activities that they are not competent to undertake or that they consider pose unnecessary risks.

Equipment

The PS should wear suitable clothing for their role that provides adequate protection taking into account the ground and weather conditions.

Consider knee support and footwear that supports the ankles.

The PS has to be comfortable with what they are wearing. They shouldn't wear anything they are not happy with or restricts them in any way.

Consistency in clothing is important; what the PS wears at the start of the test, they keep on throughout the test.

They should not wear anything that impedes the dog (gets in the way) of the dog accessing the sleeve.

It is important to remain familiar with the KC Rules and Regulations as they can change.

KC rule I (B) 18 currently (2023) states –

Health & Safety Bite Exercises

a) Patrol Dog - Equipment and Protective Clothing

The judge must either provide the equipment or check its suitability. Sleeves must have a tapered edge, and a jute cover, and must be suitable for all dogs entered. The cover must not be brand new, nor frayed. There must be a hand grip inside the sleeve. Close weave covers must not be used. There must not be external buckles, or a joint in the sleeve which leaves a gap. The sleeve must not be obscured by clothing or anything else. Puppy sleeves may not be used. 'Scratch pants' which protect the helper from dogs' nails may be worn. The sleeve must be accessible should the dog bite.

b) For Quartering the ground, Search and Escort, Recall from protected stewards, and Pursuit and Detention of protected stewards, protected stewards must wear a sleeve as described in the Equipment and Protective Clothing regulation on the right arm.

c) For the Test of courage, protected stewards must wear a sleeve on the right arm as described in the Equipment and Protective Clothing regulation, or a 'bite jacket' with a light-coloured jute area on the right arm. Items used in the Test of courage must be designed to be non-injurious to the dogs, with no sharp points or hard objects inside any sacks used.

Sleeves used at the trial must be suitable for the hardest dog but be biteable for all dogs.

It is important to refrain from leaving sleeves or any other equipment or props lying anywhere on the field which may distract the dog or cause interference to the test.

If using a bite jacket, the PS must be trained in such equipment, able to use it capably and must ensure that it conforms with the KC requirement of having a light-coloured jute area on the right arm.

Risk Assessments

Each trial should have a relevant Risk Assessment document which is usually completed by the Trials Manager and acknowledged by the judge.

A Risk Assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm to people (and dogs) on the trial ground. The Risk Assessment enables organisers to determine whether there are sufficient precautions in place, or if more needs to be done to prevent harm being realised.

All Societies have a ‘Duty of Care’ to all who attend their trial however everybody is responsible for their own actions.

A typical Risk assessment specific to the Patrol Dog Stake can be as follows –

Patrol Round overall

Injury from falling, tripping etc.	Protected Steward Judges, Unprotected stewards Competitors	Check area for hazards i.e.holes/dips etc. Appropriate footwear to be worn	Judge to examine the test area to check for hazards. Protected stewards to also check for hazards and walk the area upon which they are to deliver exercises. Appropriate footwear to be worn by Protected Stewards, Judges and Unprotected Stewards, in respect of their role.
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Injury related to contact with dogs	Protected Stewards	Use of Stewards competent to carry out the individual roles. Fully briefed Stewards. Competitors to be briefed.	<p>The experience of the protected stewards should be taken into account when devising the test.</p> <p>All protected stewards must be fully briefed by the Judge and confirm that they have a full and proper understanding of their role. They should ensure they query with the Judge any aspect of the test they have doubt about.</p> <p>Competitors must be briefed about the test.</p> <p>Protected stewards will not be placed in locations or positions where access, egress or presence in that position involves risks of injury.</p> <p>When delivering the pursuit and detention and recall exercises, protected stewards must be aware of the progress of the dog and be prepared to take the dog on the protective equipment if necessary.</p> <p>Bite protection on the right arm must be sufficient to prevent injuries.</p> <p>Puppy sleeves must not be worn. Robust clothing must be worn.</p> <p>Judges will ensure that any props introduced are necessary for the conduct of the test and are used in a way that does not risk exposure of unprotected parts of protected stewards' bodies to biting or impede access to protective equipment.</p>
Injury related to contact with dogs (i.e dog biting unprotected parts of body)	Judges Non protected stewards Protected Stewards	Judge and unprotected stewards remain at safe distance from dogs undertaking test	The Judge and unprotected steward should be aware of their location, position and thus safety throughout the test.
Injuries to spectators and members of public related to contact with dogs	Spectators Members of Public	Test area will be clearly defined. Test will not be conducted in public places unless by specific arrangement. Spectators to remain in designated areas. Points of access to test area to be monitored and informative notices posted. Test to be stopped immediately	<p>Test area will be clearly defined and all reasonable precautions should be undertaken to ensure safety of spectators and members of the public.</p> <p>Spectators to remain in designated areas.</p> <p>Points of access to test area to be monitored and, in the case of gateway or public footpaths, informative notices posted.</p> <p>Test to be stopped immediately if non participants enter test area.</p>

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Other RA points to consider

It is still the responsibility of the PS to carry out their own risk assessment. They must walk the field thoroughly as they are responsible for the route, the dogs projectory and where handlers will be walked.

The judge should walk the field on their own then with the PS.

It is essential that there is a pre-arranged signal, i.e., left hand up, amongst all the PS, Judge and Patrol steward/scribe that can be used when an element of the patrol round goes wrong.

If the dog is biting when it shouldn't be, the PS should keep the dog on the sleeve until the handler has control of the situation. Things could go wrong if the dog drops off the sleeve in such a situation.

Questions to ask the Judge (and points to consider) at the briefings and discussion of roles

The PS needs to know what to do when the dog is on the arm and make sure they ask judge if he hasn't explained thoroughly enough. Also know what to do if the dog/misses/drops off/doesn't bite. How far to run on and where to run to. Know how much noise is to be made, how loud to shout and who is challenging first – PS or the handler?

PS should know where they are running from and to; make sure they thoroughly check the field where you are running. Be happy with the ground, run it a few times first.

Judge has responsibility for the whole of the field's safety; PS has responsibility for his own area.

What to do if things go wrong – run through the different scenarios.

Follow the judges' instruction, have every bit explained, i.e. the stewards role, the judges role, who gives signals etc.

The judge might ask the PS to give a rating (say between 1-10) for the dog's grip, retain and hold. If he is asking this of the PS, the judge needs to have a conversation with the PS to explain what he sees as the perfect 10, ask the PS to rate against it.

The PS must be confident to decline to take part in any activities that they are not competent to undertake or that they consider pose unnecessary risks.

After the run through of the patrol round, ensure there is dialogue between all protected stewards, the judge and the patrol stewards. Discuss what was done, how it could be improved and what worked well.

The Patrol Round Exercises – points to consider

Chase

Tone and volume of unheated conversation

Watch for the dog's approach with a glance

Each dog runs differently. Fast dog, PS will have no chance but to go with the dog. Bring it round and place the dog. Slower dog, when it hits the sleeve, carry on for a few steps.

Safely catch a dog; consistency – always the same, same reasonable pace and direction for each dog. Do not swing dogs – be aware of the relevant I regs – PS sets a speed they can keep up for each dog.

Don't bend over the dog, keep upright, keep sleeve in front ready to use.

After the dog has bitten, know whether to freeze, make the arm dead, or having arm movement. Ascertain from judge what he wants PS to do after the dog has bitten. How does PS act then? What to do if the dog misbites?

Recall

Tone and volume of unheated conversation

Be capable of taking a bite. PS must know when to stop running. Have set points to run to; know where the dog is to be called and where the run-out point is. If obvious dog is not recalling, don't hold sleeve up, let it take the bite, then carry on as if chase. Check over shoulder to see if the dog turned when called.

If the dog closes in on PS and is not biting, keep running. PS can influence the dog here, assume the dog could bite.

Need to be conscious that some dogs are extremely fast, be careful of having a fixed point. PS needs to be conscious of what dog is doing at all times.

Hides

PS must have the confidence and knowledge to give feedback to the judge. Know what judge wants in terms of eye contact, where to look, where to stand, sit safely. Speak up if not happy. If dog bites, PS to ask if judge wants them to hang onto the sleeve until handler gets there – safer.

PS to have the confidence to say how they feel about the hides position.

Be forewarned that not all the dogs will come in the same way, be prepared for this. Keep alert, watch/listen to where the dog is coming in.

Stay relaxed, it's a confidence thing. Stand square on with back to tree or something – a clever dog can make PS move. Be compliant.

Be careful not to make movement and don't do anything to overstimulate the dog. Keep quiet, leave it to the judge to mark.

If sitting, make sure the sitting point is safe. PS to make sure that they can be seen by one other person on the field. Have a pre-determined signal to let others know if things are going wrong.

Take instruction, especially where the judge wants PS arm positioned. Learn to read the dog. PS to ensure protected and if they are in fear of being bitten then they must protect themselves and feed sleeve. Know what action to take; what their reaction should be to any incident.

The exercise must be the same for every dog

Position of sleeve up to judge

Ask what stance to take, where to look

How to react when found – be verbal or compliant/silent

Keep still, have sleeve ready for something happening. Have a contingency plan

Be in a position so that there is time to react if dog bites.

Escort/Attack on handler

When more than one PS, make sure on same side for every dog. If the handler inadvertently changed the order when telling PS where to go, PS to have the confidence to put themselves back in the correct position. Be consistent in the training /stumbling etc; eye contact for each dog.

If 2 PS and 1 runs off; make sure that the sleeve is available, PS may be running off in a straight line or curved to the right. Never left. Have the confidence to change this if necessary on the run through.

There should be no sudden body movements unless directed by judge. Any voice, movements should be consistent for each dog.

Make sure the ground is stable

How far to go when attempting to overpower handler and if stopped by dog, how to work sleeve and body movement when dog bites; continuation of escort.

Need to know from judge the pace PS is walking, if the handler hangs back, does the judge want PS to slow down. Know what they are to do if the dog misses or comes off; does PS stand still or carry on going after the handler.

Test of courage

Briefed and practised until everyone knows what they are doing. PS needs to know the level of noise, eye contact and movement; the timing of everything

Always protect themselves, never know what may happen. PS needs to think on their feet. Sleeve has always got to be ready.

Make sure you can read and see where the dog is going to go. Keep an eye on the dog; they all come in at different speeds and it is a front on test.

Be aware if the dog is showing signs of nervousness; be sympathetic - it's not the hardest wins all.

Watch for the judges signal to let dog in.

It is completely down to the judge how the test is run, but PS has to be completely happy with what is required. Ensure it is safe for both dog and PS.

Ask what to do when dog on another PS? What do the other PS do when dog is on sleeve? How much/duration of noise and movement.

What does everyone do if something goes wrong?

If there are several PS, be in a position to take a bite – leave a gap between each PS to take the dog safely. If there is a larger group, dog is less focussed on a safe place of biting.

PS needs to be used to props they are holding – practice with them. Be sensible; need good timing with the correct position of the sleeve and the prop.

Don't over complicate the TOC, so that the dog acts out of character; this is a sport and it should be fun.

Once the handler has got the dog out, PS not to do their own thing, they are under control of the steward/handler. Present a professional picture.

PS must be aware of KC Rule (1) B 18 which currently (2023) states

Health & Safety Bite exercises

In any exercise where the dog is required to bite a protected steward (protected consistent with safety), it must be on the right arm. Any indiscriminate biting will result in the dog being excluded from the remainder of the test. At no time in any exercise should the sleeve be presented to the dog in an obvious and exaggerated manner, but equally it must not be obscured in such a way as to make it inaccessible to the dog. A protected steward shall, for both their safety and that of the dog, take the energy impact of the bite, landing all of the dog's feet as soon as possible, and without any such movement that causes the dog to be swung or lifted up in a circular motion.

Finally, remember it's a team effort, all PS should look out for each other and speak up if they have any concerns. They should keep natural, not overact and not try to be something they are not. Be aware of each exercise, consider the body language, get enjoyment out of it, relax and be comfortable. Thank you to all protected stewards and enjoy yourself!