

Working Trials Association

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Dates to remember: Our last show will be a double IPO weekend [entries close on 8 November], in Bulawayo on 23 & 24 November. There will be an Xmas dinner at KCH on 1 December. They also will organise an Xmas party for the dogs combined with a Treasure hunt etc. This will be on 15 December.

Shows. Two Obedience shows were held end of September, but I have no details. Believe some of our members did very well. Latest news flash: Just back from the last DJ Championship show. Ten dogs were entered. Three in the top class, who did not disgrace themselves, but did not just get a clear round. Ursula's Tammy came 1st, Kelly 2nd and Clive Edwards' Kama 3rd. In the DJ 2 class 7 were competing and some good handling, Ted and Sheila excelled in a very calm attitude and very good response with their dogs. Geraldine did very well with Eisen, getting a clear round but lost out on time as Ted's Odette was just a few seconds quicker as well with a clear round. Then Wirka, who really had a hilarious round, it looked as if she was misjudging each jump and crashed over or into them. You could not help laughing and perhaps Geraldine can get some answers out of the article in the next issue: How to train your dog to jump correctly.

The Effects of Stress on the Performance Dog

Some of the signs of stress are as follows: panting, yawning, scratching, licking, staring, dilated pupils, blinking, avoiding eye contact, tucked tail, low and slow wagging tail, shaking, salivating, whining, barking, diarrhea, sniffing, sudden onset of dandruff, shedding, muscle tension, hypersensitivity, increased reactivity, zooming around the ring, general restlessness, or avoidance of handler. Most of these signs could be observed any given day at an agility trial.

Stress, anxiety and excitement can increase a human's body temperature causing the need to engage the cooling mechanisms. The result is sweating. Dogs are also susceptible to this phenomenon, but they sweat through the pads of their feet and their mouths. Hence, the wet paw prints on the floor.

Yet another great window to emotions is the tail. A tucked tail can mean mental discomfort, while a slow wagging tail can be translated as insecurity, uncertainty, or indecision. Licking is a complex signal that can sometimes be interpreted as a sign of tension. Some stressed dogs appear to be licking the air and do not seem to be 'aiming' at any person or thing.

This dog may lick his lips or even begin licking his own body (Coren, 2000).

Yet another important sign of stress, which I am personally very painfully aware of, is avoidance. Avoidance of eye contact is a real problem when trying to gain a dog's attention or otherwise communicate with him. A stressed out dog will have difficulty in focusing on you and the task at hand. This lack of focus can cause a delayed response, which can

mean the difference between a clean run and elimination. In agility this dog will be slower off the mark and slower in completing the obstacles for an overall slower time. If the dog is avoiding you and eye contact with you, these delays are inevitable. The breaking of eye contact is a sign of submission and perhaps fear and anxiety in this case.

Some dogs become over-aroused when under performance pressure. Their pupils will become dilated and they appear to be 'out of it.' This could be an example of Pavlov's 'excitable' animal vs. the 'inhibited' animal. Scott and Fuller expounded upon Pavlov's theory and identified the passive dog and the dog that tries to escape. Within this class they found enormous variability. The 'excitable' dog may bark and whine constantly or race about wildly which in turn lead to inconsistent performance and a loss of control. On the other hand, the 'inhibited' dog will shut down, leave the ring, stress sniff or find some other way to avoid the pressure. Both types of dogs, though displaying their stress in different ways, are equally counterproductive (Steinker, 2000). This results in a large problem in the agility dog where speed, accuracy and timing are the name of the game.

To be continued



Two of our WTA members went to the World WUSV Schutzhund competition in Austria, to support an old friend and trainer, who qualified for the South African team. The team consisted of Wade Armand, Greta & Grant Higgo and the team manager Greg Lotte. Others who we met were Maureen & Keith Warburton, Jill & Alf Sergal, John Buckley & Dave Harris.

Over 150 dogs were entered, of which 137 competed. Three dogs qualified with an overall Excellent mark, 52 qualified with an SG [very good] qualification, 65 with a G [good] qualification, 5 with S [sufficient] and 12 were insufficient or disqualified.

Out of 24 nations [how festive to see all those flags up on one side of this enormous stadium], Germany came first, Italy 2nd, Austria 3rd and S Africa 18th place. In the individual rating: Wade came 65th well above average with Vasco.

We went to the tracking grounds and saw some fantastic performances, dogs going at a steady pace with nose down. All fields were ploughed, very damp, with a sort of weed, making up the coverage.

Zimbabwe Show Managers can you imagine to have to find tracking grounds for 135 dogs, about 40 a day? To organise this show is enormous. All dogs did the footstep tracking. Only 5 dogs failed in this section with insufficient points. Two, from the Swiss team, had full marks [100] and many others were well over 90, Wade's Vasco getting 98 points!

The obedience section was amazing, all 100% focussed on their handlers, working with speed [retrieve on the flat and over the two jumps], fastness and willingness. The whole stadium would clap for nearly all send aways, which were performed with top speed and immediate drop on command at the end. It must have been so strange for quite a few dogs, to work with all this noise! Not one of the 135 failed in the obedience section. Each day in the stadium, dogs were worked, starting at about 6 in the morning: 6 dogs would compete in the obedience section, then 6 dogs did their 'man work' and that went on for all the days the show was on. The man work section was a pleasure to watch as all but 5 dogs qualified and the handlers and their dogs showed some very good work.

Out of the 135 dogs doing man work, 4 had 96, 9 had 95 and 8 had 94 as a result. Wade's Vasco earned 91 points for the man work and he was a little low in the obedience, but was the best of the S Africa team. After having seen it all as well as staying till the Grand Finale, there was time to tour Austria. Some splendourous scenery, vivid blue sky, deep green fields, leaves in a thousand luminous hues, splashed with flaming scarlet, lustrous gold, throbbing vermilion, fiery orange, in between the dark green fir trees. Mountains on all sides and even snow capped ones, was the cherry on the pudding.

Next year the WUSV will be held from 2 to 5 October in Italy. In 2004 this event will be held in Holland in Eindhoven.

Apologies for a late Newsletter as I also want to include the results of the last Dog Jumping Championship show on 3 November [see under shows].