

Alliance for Emergency Response Instructors and Examiners

Canine Search Specialist Certification
Examination Annex (January 2012)





MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Paws of Life Foundation, at the request of the Alliance for Emergency Response Instructors and Examiners (AERIE), is to assist local, state and federal agencies in the training, certification and maintenance of Canine Search Specialist teams as a resource for search and rescue operations. As a result, subject matter experts were consulted in the development of the following items:

- 1) Fundamental Skills Assessment examination criteria for canine search and rescue disciplines.
- 2) Certification Examination criteria for canine search and rescue disciplines.
- 3) Examiner qualification criteria and approval process for canine search and rescue disciplines

NOTE

Interpretations and clarifications of this document shall be made by the Board of Directors of AERIE in consultation with the Paws of Life Foundation. Any system maintenance issues shall be received by the AERIE Board of Directors.



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INTRODUCTION

It was agreed that, to the extent possible, the certification examinations would strive to meet or exceed the industry standard and use existing criteria such as ASTM standards, National Incident Management System Typing and the SWGDOG Guidelines.

Objectives

The objectives for a standardized Canine Search Specialist Examination process are to:

- Provide a uniform and objective process to determine the current skill levels of Canine Search Specialist teams for use by local, state and federal agencies.
- Provide score sheets to the respective teams regarding the observations made during the examination. This information can be used for further Canine Search Specialist team development and improvement
- Maintain a current roster of certified Canine Search Specialist teams.

Definitions

- Certified Team – A certified Canine Search Specialist team is comprised of a search canine and a handler who have successfully attained Canine Search Specialist Certification, which includes successful completion of the Foundation Skills Assessments (FSA) and the Certification Examination (CE).
- Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) – An assessment of the basic search skills to determine the team's next step in the examination process.
- Certification Examination (CE) – An examination of the minimal skills identified as necessary for a team to operate in the desired discipline.
- Certification Preparation (CP) – An event utilizing all of the resources for a CE with the intent of preparing and maintaining teams for certification.
- Hosting Agency – A team, emergency management agency or other entity, in conjunction with AERIE, which sponsors a canine event.
- Event – Any training, examination, or gathering that is sponsored, sanctioned, or authorized by AERIE.

EXAMINATION COMPONENTS AND METHODS

Canine Examinations are designed to promote entry-level skills in canine search and rescue. To receive a certification every candidate must:

- 1) Pass the Fundamental Skills Assessment (FSA) which is designed as an entry level qualification, and based upon the assumption that canines and handlers will continue their training to achieve a certifying examination (CE).
- 2) Successfully complete a fundamental knowledge written exam showing knowledge of canine first aid, canine search strategy and tactics, the general use of dogs in search and rescue, canine drive and learning theory, and ethics. (50 questions) The fundamental CSS written exam may be waived if a handler has previously successfully



completed an AERIE exam with another dog within the previous five (5) years of the new examination date

- 3) Successfully complete a discipline specific knowledge written exam demonstrating knowledge specific to the canine search discipline for which they wish to attempt a certifying exam. Topics covered are specific to that discipline and are listed in appropriate appendix. (50 questions) The discipline specific CSS written exam may be waived if a handler has previously successfully completed an AERIE exam with another dog in that discipline within the previous five (5) years of the new examination date.

Successful completion of the written exams signifies that the holder has met and exceeded the ASTM guidelines outline in the References of this document.

- 4) Demonstrate a level of obedience and non-aggressive behavior toward other SAR resources in all disciplines.
- 5) Successfully complete the certification examination (CE) as defined.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following information is to be used for all the Canine Examinations. Additions for each specialty are noted in that particular section.

Process/Implementation

- The canine shall be a minimum of 12 months old before participating in any CE.
- The AERIE Canine Search Specialist (CSS) Certification process is divided into two parts:
 - Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)
 - Certification Evaluation (CE)
- Prior to participating in a Certification Evaluation the applicant will have successfully completed
 - the AERIE CSS Fundamental Skills written exam
 - the AERIE discipline specific CSS written exam
 - the AERIE CSS FSA or be able to present a current certification administered by a national organization that meets or exceeds the FSA for that discipline.
- The Certification Evaluations/Certification Preparations will be conducted at the national level, scheduled by AERIE. These will be two day events (minimum) and may be a combination of CE and CP.
- Examiners will be selected from the AERIE Examiner Roster

Ground Rules

- Muzzles or electronic (shock) collars are not permitted in any phase of the evaluation process.
- Abuse (e.g., physical, mental, verbal) of the canine is not acceptable at any time.
- No access to search sites after setup of test.
- Handler is responsible for care and safety of the canine at all times.



- Handlers wishing to test a second canine in the same discipline in one CE will not be allowed to use the same areas for the second canine as the first canine. Examiners will set up new areas for the second canine.
- If a canine is injured during an examination, the clock will not stop. The handler should be prepared to attend to a minor injury and the team may proceed. If the handler or examiners determine that the injury needs immediate veterinary attention, the team will not continue in the examination. The examiners will determine if it is a no-test, a failed attempt or a pass.
- Aggression will not be tolerated at any time.

Canine and Handler Requirements (produced prior to attempting a CE)

- 1) Canine must be a minimum of 12 months of age.
- 2) NFPA 472/CFR 291910.120 Part Q – Hazardous Materials – Awareness Level Course.
- 3) The candidate must have completed a Bloodborne Pathogens training course that meets or exceeds 29CFR1910.
- 4) Incident Command System (ICS)/Incident Management System (IMS) course NIMS ICS-200. (Level 300/400 recommended).
- 5) NIMS IS-700 and 800 course, or higher.
(<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700.asp>)
- 6) A current nationally approved Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation certification.
- 7) A current American Red Cross or equivalent Basic First Aid Course or higher medical training.
- 8) The candidate must produce written proof of the canine having successfully completed a nationally recognized obedience evaluation, which meets or exceeds the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen test unless challenging the CSS-Disaster examination. Examples include, but are not limited to, evaluations conducted by a recognized Association of Pet Dog Trainers or National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors, training clubs or organizations, FEMA and/or law enforcement instructors unless completing the Disaster Search Specialist FSA.
- 9) Successful completion of a Crime Scene Preservation class that is recognized by the handlers deploying agency.
- 10) Proof of passing the AERIE written CSS fundamental knowledge and CSS discipline specific written examinations.
- 11) Proof of successful completion of the Fundamentals Skills Assessment (FSA) required for that discipline
- 12) Proof of an approved ground search certification or equivalent.



FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

The AERIE CSS Fundamental Skills Assessment (FSA) is designed to identify the basic skills needed by canine team during search operations in that specialty. The assessment specific to that discipline, or a certification that meets or exceeds the criteria, must be completed prior to attempting an AERIE CSS examination. **Completion of the FSA does not result in the issuance of a certificate or credential.**

Evaluation Guidelines

- 1) Evaluations will be recorded on the appropriate score sheet.
- 2) At the conclusion of the process, the evaluation and comments will be reviewed with the respective Canine Search Specialist.
- 3) Once a Canine Search Specialist Team has completed the FSA, it is eligible to participate in the CE.
- 4) Two rostered examiners OR one rostered examiner and a designee by the rostered examiner will administer the FSA. The designee must meet the following requirements:
 - Canine Handler
 - Must have a certified/operational Search Canine for at least three years in that discipline OR
 - Must be an active law enforcement detection dog handler
 - Non-Canine Handler
 - Must be a former search canine handler in that discipline or law enforcement detection dog handler

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS

The AERIE CSS Certification Examination (CE) is designed to identify the minimum knowledge, skills and abilities needed by canine team during search operations in that specialty. Upon successful completion of a Certification Examination, a certificate or credential will be issued by AERIE for that canine discipline.

The certificate or credential is good only for the handler and dog tested for two years from issuance unless otherwise noted in the Certification Examination.

Evaluation Guidelines

- 1) The team must successfully complete all required skills of the CE
- 2) Evaluations will be recorded on the appropriate score sheet.
- 3) At the conclusion of the process, the evaluation and comments will be reviewed with the respective Canine Search Specialist.
- 4) After a Canine Search Specialist Team has successfully completed the CE, the Team must recertify within two years, unless otherwise noted, of its last examination date. Failure of a recertification examination will result in the immediate loss of certification, regardless of the Team's original examination expiration date. There are no certification extensions or grace periods.



Staffing

1. Every CE event will have a hosting agency.
2. Every CE event will have at least one (1) Chief Examiner. Preference is for there to be one (1) Chief Examiner per discipline tested.
3. There will be a minimum of two examiners per certification test administered.
 - a. At least one (1) of the examiners must be certified in the test being administered.

Hosting Agency Responsibilities

A hosting agency will be responsible for:

1. Securing the required facilities for the CE. It is strongly suggested that facilities such as National Guard bases, Camps (Boy Scout/Girl Scout) or other such types of reserved recreational facilities be used. This allows for restriction of contamination by hikers, walkers and others.
 - a. Locations should be vetted through the Canine Working Group prior to scheduling an event.
2. Recruit volunteers to serve as subjects.
3. Provide such items as radios, flagging tape and batteries for use during the CE.
4. Have in place the following
 - a. Medical Plan (ICS 206)
 - b. Safety Officer
 - c. Incident Command location complete with sign in station

Chief Examiner Responsibilities

A Chief Examiner is an Examiner in good standing with AERIE and has served as an examiner at a minimum of three (3) CE's. Responsibilities of the Chief Examiner will be:

1. Provide guidance to examiners pertaining to the set-up of examinations (identification of areas, safety concerns)
2. Supervise/conduct CE's
3. Serve as an expert and mitigating official in the case of any complaints by candidates.
4. Ensure that examinations are conducted in a fair and professional manner in compliance with the stated guidelines

Examiner Responsibilities

1. Set up, conduct and critique examinations to the stated guidelines
2. Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

Evaluation Procedures

- 1) The Chief Examiner(s) and the hosting agency shall determine the testing area.
- 2) Whenever possible, examinations will be double blind.
- 3) Any accident/injury shall be reported immediately to the hosting agency or their designee.
- 4) Candidates may use a GPS or other electronic tracking device unless otherwise noted.
- 5) Candidates will be provided with a map of their search area with the boundaries either clearly marked or utilizing marked natural boundaries.



- 6) All candidates have a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes to develop their search strategy which is in addition to their designated search time to complete the exam.
- 7) The candidate shall indicate subjects'/targets' location on the map provided.
- 8) Visualization of the subject/target by the handler shall not be an automatic fail but assessment shall be based on performance of the team throughout the examination. However, if the candidate has led or is leading the dog to the subject without proper strategy/working behaviors, the Examiner(s) shall call the test as a fail.

AGGRESSION POLICY

Each sponsoring organization shall be responsible for assuring that aggressive behavior is modified or the canine shall not be eligible to participate in events.

Definition

Canine aggression is an attempted or actual unprovoked attack on another canine or person. A canine may also be evaluated as aggressive if it exhibits significant warning signs of imminent unprovoked attack (continuous growling, snarling, fear-barking, etc.).

Policy

Canine aggression toward people and/or other canines is not acceptable.

Ramifications

In the event a canine demonstrates aggressive behavior at any CE, the following procedures will be followed:

- Canine Attacks a Person – Upon an unprovoked attack, the canine will be removed from the CE or CP. The Chief Examiner will forward an account of the attack to the AERIE. AERIE will immediately notify the host agency of the incident and forward findings at the conclusion of the review process. The canine is not permitted to participate in a CE or CP during the review process.
- Canine Attacks Another Canine – If a canine attacks another canine at a CE or CP, the Chief Examiner shall immediately review the incident and determine if the canine will be allowed to continue. The Chief Examiner shall notify other Examiners at the CE or CP, the canine team's sponsoring agency, and AERIE.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

The candidate must possess all of the equipment/supplies appropriate for their discipline and in compliance of NIMS guidelines for the Type of examination being challenged. Failure to possess any equipment/supplies that the candidate may need during the field examination will constitute a failure of the examination.



FAILURE TO PERFORM

- 1) No candidate will be certified until they have successfully completed all portions of the examination.
- 2) If a candidate fails any examination twice, they must wait a minimum of six (6) months from the date of the last failure to retest. To retest they must present their training logs attesting to training in type during the previous six months.
- 3) It will be the candidate's responsibility to make arrangements to retest. They are allowed one retest within one year of the original failed test at no additional charge.
- 4) If a CE is stopped by a candidate or the Examiner(s) due to legitimate safety reasons that are beyond the control of the candidate or Examiner Team, the candidate will be allowed to retake the entire CE. The first attempt will not be counted as a failure. As guidance, these could include severe thunderstorms in the immediate area, tornadoes, dangerously high winds etc. In most cases, the hosting agency selects the area. A candidate who chooses not to search or stops the search due to terrain, fatigue, distractions, injury to self or dog, onset of dusk will receive a fail.
- 5) Candidates will be advised of the examination results at the end of the entire exercise in an official debriefing, which will include positive feedback as well as constructive criticism.
- 6) At no time may any canine show aggression towards other dogs, Examiners or handlers during the Examination process. See Aggression Policy.
- 7) Abuse of any canine during testing will result in an automatic failure.

EXAMINERS

At least two (2) Examiners shall be present at the examination. Examiners will not be evaluating/testing individuals on their own team.



Appendix B -- References

- ASTM F1848, 1998. Classification of Search and Rescue Dog Crew/Teams, ASTM 100 Barr Harbor Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19428
- ASTM F1847, 1998. Guide for Demonstrating Minimum Skills of Search and Rescue Dogs, ASTM 100 Barr Harbor Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19428
- ASTM F1879, 1998. Guide for Demonstrating Obedience and Agility in Search and Rescue Dogs, ASTM 100 Barr Harbor Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19428
- USDA, 1970. Fire Weather – A Guide for the Application of Meteorological Information to Forest Fire Control Operations. USFS Handbook Number 360. National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, ID 83705. Publication #NF ES-1174

Appendix C – Scientific Working Group on Dog & Orthogonal Detector Guidelines (SWGDOG) Terminology

www.swgdog.org

<http://www.ifri.fiu.edu/SWGDOG/SC1abcde%20approved%204%202008.pdf>