



Lure Coursing 101 for Beginners

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LURE COURSING ORGANIZATIONS:

There are two organizations that hold sanctioned Lure Coursing trials, the American Sighthound Field Association (ASFA) and the American Kennel Club (AKC). Both the AKC & ASFA Lure Coursing Tests and Trials are governed by rules. These rules are similar for both organizations, but it is important to know both. It is imperative to know those rules so that you understand why trials and tests are run the way they are. Both the ASFA and AKC have a published rulebook that is available at every trial. Both organizations have an electronic rulebook available as well. There are many people at field trials that are seasoned coursing people and are willing to help, please seek them out if you have any questions.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY DOG WILL RUN?

For the most part, chasing the white plastic bags ("bunnies") is instinctual. That means there is no real training that is required other than physical conditioning. Some dogs may not chase the bunnies at first, or ever, but sometimes they can learn by watching other dogs. It may take a couple of practice runs before the light comes on, but once it does you will never have a leisurely walk to the starting line again! To see if your dog is interested, there are several companies that sell a "flirt pole" toy that has some sort of toy or lure on the end. You can mimic this toy easily. Many Lure Coursing folks start their young puppies out by using a buggy whip (easily acquired at most Tractor Supply Company stores in the equine department). Simply tie a plastic grocery bag to the end. You can drag this around your yard or the local park to see if your dog has any interest in the moving bag.

Another way to see if your dog will run on the actual course is to participate in a CBARRC Fun Day or a Lure Coursing trial that offers practice runs. CBARRC almost always has Lure Coursing offered at its Spring and Fall fun days. Please check the www.cbarrc.org website for scheduling and event details. Most clubs will offer practice runs at the end of their lure coursing trials, and sometimes if the field is set up the evening before a trial, they might let you try it out on Friday evening. To find out, you can contact the Field Trial Secretary listed on the event Premium. It is important that your dog is fit and at an appropriate weight for coursing. Lure Coursing is a fast, high-adrenaline sport. If your dog is properly conditioned, they have much less chance of injury.

A NOTE ON FAST COURSING ABILITY TESTS (FCATs):

As the popularity of FCATs increases, a word of caution. If you plan to Lure Course competitively beyond FCATs you may first want to practice with a Lure Coursing club before beginning FCAT. The reasoning behind this is that you may inadvertently train your dog to only run 100 yards and stop. Since Lure Coursing is at least 600 yards long, you will want to ensure your dog knows the course doesn't stop at 100 yards. It is also highly recommended that you attend FCATs with a club who have experienced lure operators and field committee members. It is expressed that individuals take great caution when entering FCAT trials to ensure that the coursing surface is appropriate for fast/heavy hounds and that the course set up has a catch box that has extensive run-out room after the dog crosses the finish line.



-----LURE COURSING TESTS-----

There are several types of lure coursing tests, but the tests covered below are associated with competitive lure coursing for sighthounds. To participate in a test, you will need to sign up either ahead of time, or the day of the trial before roll call closes. *Note: A Lure Coursing Test (AKC JC/QC or ASFA Cert) is not a practice, and you should not expect it to be treated as such. That means you will not be able to run along with the dog to help it complete the test. If your dog has never seen the lure before, it is advised that you attend a field trial and let your dog run a practice before spending the money on a coursing test.

AKC Junior Courser (JC) Test:

For an AKC Junior Courser (JC) Test, your dog must run the course (at least 600 yards including no less than 4 turns) uninterrupted. If you (or your dog) have never been to a lure coursing trial and you do not know if your dog will run, OR if your dog has ONLY run a Fast CAT, it is highly encouraged that you attend a practice before attempting a JC Test. A JC is not required to earn the QC.

AKC Qualifying Courser (QC) Test:

An AKC QC Test is the test which must be passed for your dog to run competitively with other dogs and accumulate points toward its Field Championship. Your dog must complete the course uninterrupted, without interfering with the dog it is running with. If your dog has never practiced with another dog at a coursing event, it is highly encouraged that you practice your dog before entering to run the AKC Qualifying Courser (QC) test. This is for the safety of your dog and the dog that it will run with. An ASFA Certifying Course (or ASFA Field Champion) may be used in lieu of the QC requirement to compete.

ASFA Certifying Course:

The ASFA Certifying Course is nearly identical to the AKC QC. The AKC QC (or AKC Field Champion title) may be used in lieu of an ASFA Certification form to enter an ASFA Trial competitively. The judge for either the AKC QC or ASFA Certifying test will fill out the form to show your dog completed the QC, (or Cert). You must submit a copy of this paperwork when you enter your first trial, so make sure you keep it in a safe place.

Some AKC Lure Coursing clubs hold QC tests before a trial so that dogs who successfully complete their QC may enter the trial. It is advised that owners who choose to enter a trial understand the risk if their dog is inexperienced and have not previously run with competition. A dog with little experience can be sidelined if they are run into by another dog on the field, or otherwise have something negative occur. Most clubs will hold coursing practice at the end of the day, after the trial on Saturdays for a nominal fee. The exception to this is time permitting and if the equipment is in good working order. Many clubs also reset the field for the next trial day. If there is an excessive number of dogs entered at the trial, or if the trial experiences a lot of technical problems, it is expected that there may not be a practice. It's recommended to contact the trial secretary to see how many dogs are entered at a trial, before driving to attend a practice (post trial).