

Obedience, Tracking and Endurance Committee (OTEC) of the Victorian Canine Association (VCA)

JUDGES GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING OF DISABLED HANDLERS

These guidelines are intended to be used as a guide for Judges only and are designed to clarify issues and provide suggestions on areas not covered in the Rule Book. These guidelines should not be interpreted as a set of Rules.

Disabilities or impairments are varied and may affect a person's ability to compete. Judges need to be aware of, and compassionate towards, these competitors.

The current ANKC Rules for Obedience Trials, Section 10 – GUIDE TO JUDGES, provides that, inter alia: "The Canine Control may modify these Rules to the extent necessary to permit handicapped persons to compete, provided that they can negotiate the exercises unassisted."

These Rules may be modified on an individual basis by the Judge on the day to allow a Disabled Handler to compete in a trial. Any modifications shall be limited only to the extent needed to allow that handler to carry out the Principal Feature of the Exercise(s).

Disabilities or impairments according to current legislation may include:

- (i) total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions
- (ii) total or partial loss of a part of the body
- (iii) the presence of a disease and/or illness
- (iv) the malfunction of a part of a person's body.

In very general terms, handler disabilities could include:

Hearing impairment, sight impairment or balance and/or other mobility problems.

It must be remembered that not all disabilities are visible and that persons with disabilities should not be denied equality with the rest of the triallers.

The onus is on the handler to advise the Judge of any disability they may have prior to commencing their individual exercises. Trial Secretaries will advise the Judge of any handlers that may require special consideration in the setting up of a ring and execution of the exercises.

There is also a need to ensure that any modifications to judging do not discriminate against other competitors.

Some areas where allowances may be needed

Obedience Trials

Revised Heeling Patterns which do not compromise the Principal Feature of the exercise.

Handler having difficulty executing sharp turns and/or carrying out Fast Pace. Handlers may be unable to throw the dumbbell the required distance or may be forced to use exaggerated or prolonged signals due to their impairment. Some dogs are unable to work close to the handler due to their handler's mobility and/or balance problems.

Judges may need to consider their position within the ring to enable effective judging.

Disabled handlers may have problems with some surfaces. Where Club Administrators are able to provide a more suitable surface for a disabled handler, all handlers in that class must also be offered the same option. N.B. Handlers are to be reminded that once a choice has been made they must complete all the exercises on their chosen surface.

Tracking Trials

A vision impaired handler may need to be led up to or close to the starting flag.

When balloting of tracks takes place, consideration should be made to give disabled handlers and tracklayers a reasonable opportunity to participate.

Endurance Tests

Disabled handlers may require verbal directions re the route and assistance at check points.

There may be a need to allow a wheelchair handler to "follow" so that other competitors are not distracted.

**JUDGES ARE REMINDED THAT COMMON SENSE MUST PREVAIL
AT ALL TIMES WHEN JUDGING**