Leonberger Club of Great Britain Draught Tests

Hinchingbrooke Country Park 3rd November 2013

My thanks as always to the LCGB and the test organisers for this invitation, it is always a pleasure to come to this venue either for swimming or Draught work. The weather was kind to us for November. We had 4 dogs entered in Level 5 giving 2 passes, no entries in Level 4 and 6 Level 3 entries providing 6 passes.

We judged all the control and manoeuvre for both Levels before setting off on a combined haul dropping off the Level 3 entrants after 1.5 miles and continuing on for a further 2 miles with the 2 Level 5 entrants. Unfortunately we had to delay the start of the Haul as some of the handlers had dogs entered in Levels 1 and 2 so we waited for them to complete those first. This is the big difference between a draught test day and a water test day. It is so much easier to work several dogs in the water but it does become more complicated to time the hauls on a draught test day if handlers have entered more than one level. It meant we finished the Level 5 Haul in the dark by the light of the moon and Carolyn’s mobility scooter headlights, not ideal but both dog were very experienced and steady workers so all was well.

Level 5

Both passes at this level were deserved but please be careful at these higher levels not to lose sight of the fun of working with your dogs, even on a test day. Tests performed at this level should appear effortless with dogs listening and responding first time, every time to each of the handler’s requests. Personally I am happier to see a dog lose an occasional point due to being overly enthusiastic than to lose a point due to an “if I must” attitude. The Manoeuvre rounds of the 2 dogs that went forward, at times lacked the effortless flow we like to see at this level although both were very accurate and completed all the obstacles cleanly, and I am sure this was due to test day nerves. It was good to see the course had been well walked and the route to be travelled thought about and planned well. As always they hauled beautifully and went on to two good passes. Today’s passes meant both teams completing the required 3 passes at this level to become LCGB Draught Champions. Congratulations to you both.

Level 3

The atmosphere at this Level was more relaxed and consequently the dogs appeared to work in a more relaxed flowing manner, please maintain this attitude as you go forward it is lovely to watch. All the teams reached the required standard to pass at this Level but will need a little more polish going forward to Level 4. The reverses in particular will need some work the dog must go back because you have asked him to not because you physically intimidate them into moving away from you. Ideally if you can stay in the heelwork position and as you reverse the dog will stay beside you in this heelwork position and reverse as well, using this method you cannot be accused of physical redirection and it looks very clean and tidy. The regulations do not ask for this method, so it is quite acceptable to stand in front of your dog and ask it to reverse, but it must appear that you are following your dog as it reverses away from you not that you are walking forward driving the dog backwards. The reverse should be reasonably straight, so in training put some markers out and reverse through these which will keep you straight, you can even use the funnel to reverse through sometimes so they get the idea of backing up further than required on test day. Well done to all, keep up the good work I look forward to seeing you work in Level 4 next year.

Thanks as always to the organisers and the stewards who worked tirelessly all day, without you these tests would be impossible. To those that kept putting a mug of hot tea and the odd sausage roll and slice cake into my hand throughout the day many many thanks!!

I for one had a great day and look forward to future tests here.

Helen Matthews

Judge