Leonberger Club of Great Britain Water Tests

Wiltshire Wet Leos, Cotswold Sailing Club

21st September 2013

Our thanks to the Test Manager Bonnie Hopkins, and the Wiltshire Wet Leos, for their invitation to judge their Water Tests again this year. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit last year and we were delighted to return.

The day dawned a bit grey and cloudy but it did stay dry and was neither too cold nor windy, so all was well. We had a good entry of 15, 5 entered in Section A, 6 in Section B plus one dog who passed A today and accepted the invitation to try B at the end of the day, plus 3 entries in section C.

Section A gave us 3 good passes, all 3 dogs worked well, though very differently, some very calm and methodical others very enthusiastically, all of them seemed to thoroughly enjoy their swim, each in their own way.

The cause of the problems with both dogs who did not quite make through Section A today appeared to be a reluctance to leave their handlers on shore and to go out to the boat with someone else calling them. We do see this a lot, new people join clubs with their Leo either adult or puppy and of course they want to be out in the water and having their own dog save them. Please as groups and individuals try not to encourage this. None of the tests actually require (Sections A and B allow but not require) the dog to swim out to its owner either in the water or in the boat, and working on the principal that your dog would always come to you if you ever needed them to, please train them from day one to swim away from you, always out to a **much trusted and experienced stranger,** until they learn how, so that swimming away from their owner is normal to them from day one. It may make this initial training a little harder but it will make the rest of your journey to Section E so much easier. However the regulations do allow you to choose who your dog swims out to in Sections A and B so on test day, by all means pre- arrange for a friend, or family member to steward for you during the test, ask anyone the dog has swum willingly to in training. Don’t worry you will get your chance to be in the water with your dog as hopefully you will begin teaching the controlled swim from your first training session, and if you need people to swim for you, then in turn they may ask you to swim for their dogs once you have learnt what is required.

We invited all of the 3 dogs that passed to take Section B later in the day if they wished, and the two that struggled with the boat today performed well in the other two exercises and with a little more work should sail through section A next test day.

Section B gave us two great passes from the 7 entries, as usual; it was either the underwater retrieve or the controlled swim that tripped up most people. Only one dog was having an off day and could not seem to focus at all, the others were let down by just one exercise and with a little more work they should fly through next time. The two passes worked beautifully and the delight of one handler as their dog completed the controlled swim for a lovely pass made our day. They started the exercise convinced that they would not succeed, and whilst the first couple of metres were a little untidy it all just fell into place and they went on to swim a great 25 metres. It goes to show that you should never stop trying, if your basic training is good, most Leos will grasp it eventually, and when they do “get it” and the” lights go on”, then they give you that look that seems to say ”oh that’s what you wanted, why didn’t you say so!” it is priceless, and when this happens on a test day that is extra special. Well done!!

Section C gave us 2 passes, and one young lady who could not focus today, so having timed out on her first exercise we continued as a training exercise, her day will come. The first of our passes completed the first 3 exercises perfectly, his controlled swim was not the tidiest I have seen from this team, but the owners knowledge of the regulations and then using them to his advantage, prevented them losing too many marks and the swim was good enough to deserve the pass. The 2nd pass was a little distracted by the distance buoys in the first exercise (a good reason to put them out on training days!!) but once she settled and completed this exercise, she went on to perform well in the last 3 exercises. Well done to both of you, we look forward to seeing them both work again in the future.

Our thanks go to all the organisers behind the scenes, and of course to the stewards, who once again worked tirelessly all day. These events could not take place without you so THANK YOU. We wish you all well with your future training and testing, keep up the great work.

Helen Matthews and Tania Matthews

Judges