

Irish Dachshund Club – Working Test as approved by the FCI.

In drafting the following working test proposal, strong consideration was given to the fact that at present very few dachshunds in Ireland (or UK) actually do any form of field work, and this is certainly the case amongst current exhibitors. The tests as detailed are therefore very basic, as our aim must be to get people working with their dachshunds, and not have exhibitors turning their backs on the working test completely. We hope that as people start to work their dogs, and see exactly what dachshunds are capable of, the tests can be modified in the future.

Although we have proposed this basic test, we feel it is important to have some guidance from Europe on working dachshunds, and will look into the possibility of arranging trips to working tests in Europe, to see what actually happens.

We have left out any exposure to live quarry, as this aspect of work is most likely to prevent current exhibitors taking part and also in the current (anti-hunting) climate in the in these islands it could prove difficult to arrange, and could result in adverse publicity for both the IDC and the IKC.

Finally, it is important that working tests are established as soon as possible as under current FCI rules we may not be able to enter our dachshund champions in the champions class at the European Winners show in 2009 unless they have passed a working test. (They would have to enter in the Open Class)

Should the committee agree with the proposed test, we suggest that a training session is set up as soon as possible. This would be held at Cloghran (ideally in conjunction with other events to reduce costs) and could combine a seminar on working dachshunds, the FCI standard, a demonstration of each of the activities in the test, and a chance for owners to try the tests with their dachshunds. This would be followed up with the first formal test being held a few months later, having given owners a chance to “practice”. Our initial idea would be to hold the training day on 13th April, and the test on 12th July, but these dates would need to be agreed by the committee and discussed with Cloghran.

We feel that dachshunds should be at least 6 months old before attempting the test, and there would be no limit on the number of times a dog could attempt the test (although only once on the same day).

Judges should be selected carefully and fully briefed on the background to the tests – possibly current working trial judges (from the Obedience section) would be most suitable. The following comments, taken from the AKC standard for judging field trials may be useful :

“ the dachshund is an all-round hunting dog bred to find game, to pursue it in an energetic and decisive manner, to follow it to ground when necessary and to deal with it with courage and determination. All phases of work should be approached eagerly, with a display of determination that indicates a willingness to stay with any problem encountered until successful. Actions should appear sensible and efficient rather than haphazard or impulsive. Judges should approach their work with the attitude that the future of the breed is in their hands, and should make their findings and selections on a basis to keep the dachshund useful for both field trials and hunting purposes.”

The Test

The test will consist of 4 separate parts, all to be taken on the same day, with a total of 25 marks available for each phase. The pass mark will be 50 (out of 100) and to start with, it will be possible to pass even if no marks are obtained in one of the 4 sections.

1. Tracking

Dachshund to follow a 300-400m trail which is 2-4 hours old, containing 3 right angled turns, one of which will have a gap of 10 m after the turn with no scent laid. The scent used for the trail will be either blood or aniseed. Ideally the trail should be laid on rough ground incorporating undulations and thick cover, however it is recognised that we will be starting off with all of the tests held at Cloghran and so we may have to lay the trail on flat grass. Dogs will be on a lead (long line) at all times during this exercise.

Points will be awarded as follows:

Searching Ability – an aptitude and eagerness to explore, regardless of hazards or discomfort, keeping control of the trail while making the best possible progress. At the check, where there is no scent for a distance after the turn, the dog should work industriously, first close to where the loss occurred, then gradually and thoroughly extending the search to regain the line.

7 points

Accuracy – consistent control of the line while making the best possible progress, following the trail with a minimum of weaving on and off, good at turning with the trail

6 points

Obedience – attentiveness and responsiveness to handler

6 points

Endurance – demonstrated by capacity to go on as long as may be necessary to complete trail

6 points

NB Dachshunds will naturally “give tongue” to announce their progress on a scent line – they should keep silent when not in contact with the scent. At this stage we are not proposing marks for proper use of voice.

2. Going to Ground

The dachshund should happily go through the tunnel at Cloghran – some form of “bait” (an item of food or a toy provided by the handler) to be placed at end of tunnel and dachshund will be encouraged to go through to “find” it.

Points to be awarded as follows:

Willingness to go to earth – the dachshund should be eager to enter the tunnel without hesitation or over-encouragement

15 points

Speed – as dachshunds should find this test easy, they should complete it very quickly

10 points

3. Obedience

Dachshunds should have a basic obedience training if they are going to compete in the field. The intention is that this phase will be judged in conjunction with “Going to Ground” in a fenced area at Cloghran.

Points to be awarded as follows:

Stay – handler in sight, dog stays in whatever position handler chooses for 1 minute

15 points

Recall – dog to wait in position chosen by handler, handler to walk forward 10 – 20 m, turn and call dog in – dog to return to handler in order for lead to be replaced, no need to sit or finish.

5 points

Dog to walk calmly on lead

5 points

NB – The stay and recall are to be 2 separate tests – they should not be combined.

4. Gun Test

Dachshunds to sit in line with handlers (on lead) while starting pistol is fired within 10m. Dachshund to remain steady and obedient to handler.

25 points

Our idea is that 2 judges will be required. One will judge the tracking, while the other will test Obedience and Going to Ground. The day will end with the Gun test which will be observed by both judges.

Actions required:

1. Committee to review and approve or refer back the proposed test
2. IKC to fence area around “tunnel” so that dachshunds can safely be let off lead for the Going to Ground and Obedience tests.
3. Dates to be agreed and arranged for “Practice” and “Test” days.
4. Agreed test to be submitted to IKC for approval
5. Judges to be identified.
6. Agreed test to be publicised in canine press and on website

It may be that we can attract new members who are more interested in working than showing – this should be encouraged.

Eventually, we should seek to establish several suitable sites for carrying out the tests, so that no member/exhibitor has to travel too far to attempt a test.

The test content should be reviewed by the committee after the practice day and again after each test day.