

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

GUIDELINES FOR DISABLED HANDLERS COMPETING IN OBEDIENCE, TRACKING OR ENDURANCE EVENTS.

These guidelines are intended to be used as a Guide for Handlers 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.

While trial Officials are expected to be compassionate towards these competitors they do need to be made aware of any special requirements a handler may have.

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 is recognized 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 trial administration of any disability that the Club may have to take into account when the ring plan and catalogues are being completed. This can be attached to their entry so that, if the Club cannot provide suitable conditions, the competitor can be given the option whether or not to proceed with their entry.

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.

Where a handler has a disability that does not require special consideration in the setting up of the ring, (e.g. impaired hearing not requiring an aide), the onus is on the handler to advise the Judge of any disability they may have prior to commencing their individual exercises.

Some handlers with disabilities may need to carry a letter from their medical practitioner attesting to their disability, especially if it is not an obvious problem.

Where handlers need to carry medication at all times – the handler is to advise the judge prior to commencing their individual exercises and the medication, in a suitable container, is to be placed on the Judge’s table. Note: Bum bags are specifically precluded in the ANKC Obedience Rules.

Some areas where allowances may be needed

Obedience Trials

Most issues will involve judging responsibilities and can be discussed with the judge on the day, but Trial Administrators will need to alert judges in certain cases. Judges may require advance notice to adapt their ring procedures for individual disabilities.

Disabled handlers may have problems with some surfaces. Where Club Administrators are able to provide a more suitable surface for a disabled handler all other 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

Again most issues will involve judging responsibilities. In certain cases Trial Administrators will need prior notice so that when balloting of tracks takes place, consideration can be made to give disabled handlers or 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. Again in certain cases Trial Administrators will need prior notice.

WHILST TRIAL ADMINISTRATORS AND JUDGES WILL ENDEAVOUR TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF ALL, IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE IN ALL CASES

HANDLERS ARE REMINDED THAT COMMON SENSE MUST PREVAIL AT ALL TIMES