

# American Rescue Dog Association

## Dense Brush Assessment

### Setup Instructions and Assessment Criteria

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#### **Description**

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An area that is at least 60% covered in dense brush that includes some areas that are impenetrable so that the handler must maneuver around them. The search area should be on that can be reasonably searched in a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 4 hours (e.g., 20 to 40 acres in size).

#### **Objective**

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The objectives of this assessment include the observation of the following skills when a team is searching an area primarily consisting of dense brush:

- Handler's ability to effectively plan and execute a grid search.
- The physical capabilities of the team.
- Handler's navigation skills.
- Canine's willingness to forge through dense brush to locate the subject.

#### **Procedures**

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- One (1) subject will be placed in an area of dense brush anywhere within the search area.
- The subject is to be someone unfamiliar to the canine.
- The subject may not have the canine's reward.
- The duration of this assessment can be no less than one (1) hour and no more than four (4) hours.
- The handler must use a topographic map (provided by the evaluator) and compass to orient himself, get to, and stay in the assigned search area.
- Prior to the start of the task, the handler will receive a briefing from the assessor(s).
- This assessment may contain either a medical emergency or a crime scene but may not contain both.
- The handler will be provided a hand-held radio. A base camp communications officer will be provided or simulated.
- When the canine alerts on the subject, the handler is to allow the canine to make the find with little or no assistance, but may join the canine and subject once the find has been made.
- Upon completion of the task the handler will draw a map of the search area and debrief with the assessor(s).

#### **Critical Criteria**

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The following criteria must be met at a satisfactory level in order to pass this assessment.

#### **Handler**

- Handler is to demonstrate knowledge of how to determine the wind conditions (e.g., puff bottle or similar).

- Handler must plan and execute a search strategy based on the briefing, assessment of the terrain, ground cover, wind and weather conditions, and detection capabilities of the canine.
- Handler must grid the assigned area(s) so as to provide adequate coverage.
- Handler has good navigation skills; uses map and compass to orient himself, get to, and stay on the assigned trail; can identify location in terms of appropriate map coordinates.
- Handler must demonstrate adequate working pace and endurance appropriate for weather and terrain conditions.
- Handler must be capable of interpreting the canine's behavior.
- Handler must maintain control of the canine. Control of the canine is defined as the handler's ability to recall and/or halt the canine if the canine enters or may potentially enter an unsafe area or be presented with an unsafe situation.
- Handler must demonstrate the ability to maneuver around obstacles or impenetrable brush, while still maintaining the search pattern.
- Handler must demonstrate the ability to navigate in dense brush. He is to use the topographic map to identify sector boundaries and get to and stay within the assigned search area. The handler must be able to determine his position via appropriate map coordinates.
- Handler must use flagging tape (or equivalent) appropriately (e.g., mark area covered, clues, canine alerts, etc.).
- Handler understands radio protocol. This element includes the handler's understanding of when to initiate communication to inform base of pertinent information.
- Handler takes correct actions to give his canine the best chance for success in locating the lost subject. This applies especially if the canine alerts or shows interest in an area and is unsuccessful in working out the scent on its own.
- Upon making the find, the handler is to correctly identify the location of the subject using appropriate map coordinates.
- Handler completes hand-drawn map after the completion of the assigned task. The map should include all pertinent information: north arrow, wind direction and speed, POD, terrain and prominent features, the track of the canine team, location of alerts, indications, and/or the subject.
- Handler asks appropriate questions during the initial briefing.
- Handler is able to relate pertinent information during debrief.

### **Canine**

- Canine is to eagerly engage in, and remain focused on the task of finding the subject.
- Canine must range at a distance appropriate for wind and weather, while maintaining appropriate contact with handler.
- Canine must be willing to range and forge through dense brush to find and get to the subject.
- Upon detecting human scent, the canine must be willing to leave the handler to locate the subject.
- Canine may locate the subject by air-scenting, tracking, trailing, or any combination of the three.
- Canine must make the "find" within an acceptable time limit, based on the demonstration of the canine team's ability to search the assigned area at a reasonable pace.

- Upon detecting human scent, the canine must willingly leave the handler and approach the subject with little or no encouragement from the handler.
- Canine shows no aversion to approaching the subject.
- Canine demonstrates good behavior toward the subject. The canine does nothing that might injure the subject.
- Upon locating the subject, the canine must eagerly accept its reward.
- Canine has a trained indication upon locating the subject. Examples of trained indications include a bark alert or recall/refind.

### **Non-Critical Criteria**

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The following criteria are not required in this assessment and do not affect the pass/fail score, but if applicable to the scenario and if performed, they will be assessed as a courtesy to the handler to indicate areas of strength and weakness.

### **Handler**

- If the assessment involves a medical emergency, the handler must provide proper aid to the subject.
- If the assessment involves a crime scene, the handler must use crime scene preservation methods.



Pass/Fail

# American Rescue Dog Association Dense Brush Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Handler: \_\_\_\_\_ Canine: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: **Temp** \_\_\_\_\_° **Humidity** \_\_\_\_\_ **Wind Direction/Speed** \_\_\_\_\_ mph

Condition:  Clear  Cloudy  Fog  Rain  Snow

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Average Range (Distance): \_\_\_\_\_ Recall/Refind (Distance): \_\_\_\_\_

Critical Criteria		
	Pass/Fail	Comments
Handler		
Recognize wind/terrain conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Explain/use systematic search method	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Demonstrate good pace/endurance	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Ability to grid the search area appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Land navigation skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Ability to pinpoint location via appropriate map coordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Cover assigned area thoroughly	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Appropriate use of flagging tape (or equivalent)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Use of proper radio protocol	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Ability to interpret canine's behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Ability to recognize and follow-up on alerts	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Map drawing skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Effectively brief	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Effectively debrief	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Maintain control of the canine	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	

*The handler and canine must pass all elements listed under critical criteria in order to successfully complete this assessment.*

Canine		
Eagerness and focus of the dog to work the problem	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Appropriate ranging distance and contact with the handler	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Long-range detection appropriate for conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Willing to forge through dense brush to find and get to subject	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Locate the subject by air-scenting, tracking, trailing, or any combination of the three	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Demonstrate good pace/endurance	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Willing to leave handler	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Shows no aversion to approaching the subject	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Demonstrates good behavior towards the subject	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Response to reward/play	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Demonstrates trained indication (recall/refind or bark alert)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Non-Critical Criteria		
	Pass/Fail	Comments
Handler		
Appropriate actions – medical emergency	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	
Appropriate actions – crime scene	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fail	

Additional Comments (Evaluator): \_\_\_\_\_

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Assessor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Please attach handler's map of search area to the evaluation form*