

## CANINE FREESTYLE JUDGING GUIDELINES

Approved by the Finnish Kennel Club on 22. April 2010. Valid from 1. May 2010.

### **General**

The purpose of these judging guidelines is to ensure that all teams and their routines are judged fairly and according to equal criteria. The judges are required to be familiar with the competition rules and judging guidelines and to judge each routine in accordance with these.

Each judge shall judge the performances independently. The scores given by individual judges may differ from each other, but a judge is expected to maintain their chosen scoring scale for every competitor.

The objective of canine freestyle is to reflect the bond and cooperation between a handler and dog, and to give expression to their creativity and artistic ability. Harsh treatment or forcing the dog, or moves that may cause injury to the dog, are not allowed at any point.

### Record book

Each dog must have a Canine Freestyle Record Book, certified by the signature of the Head Judge in the first official competition where the dog participates.

The date and place of each competition and the score earned shall be recorded in the record book and signed by the Head Judge of the event.

During the transition period 2010–2011:

- A dog may be entered to the class for which it was eligible prior to 1. May 2010.
- Eligibility must be proved in the first official event by presenting the old record book to the Head Judge who shall confirm this by signing the book.
- Eligibility to participate in the higher classes can only be proved with an old record book until 31. December 2011.

### **General instructions for all categories**

The judging time begins when the handler indicates that the team is about to start their routine, and ends when the music ends. The judge is required to watch the team throughout this time.

The duration of a routine is 1.5 – 4.0 minutes.

During the routine the dog must not stay motionless in one place more than about 10 seconds at a time.

Food, treats or toys are not allowed in the ring.

During the routine the dog may only wear a collar or comparable accessory that may be decorated. No other accessories or dog wear is allowed.

The handler must leave the leash outside the ring.

Handler costumes are permitted and should be suited to the theme of the routine.

The use of props is allowed, provided that these are an integral part of the routine and are not used as training aids or motivation toys.

The handler is required to bring their own music to the event. Information on the available sound systems shall be given to the competitors in advance.

A judge shall check all participating bitches before the competition starts. Bitches in season are not allowed to participate.

The teams must be allowed to familiarize themselves with the ring before their class begins.

#### Disqualifications:

- Dog leaves the ring.
- Harsh handling, punitive or abusive treatment of dog.
- Bringing food, treats or toys to the ring.
- Dog is on leash.
- Continuous barking during the routine, which also affects the execution of moves.
- Fouling/eliminating in the ring.
- Handler violates against the official competition rules, or does not follow the instructions given by the event organizers or judges.

Disqualifying a team requires a unanimous decision by the panel of judges.

#### Deductions

- If a dog is repeatedly out of control (= breaks contact and does not obey commands) but still remains in the ring, the maximum score for Artistic Impression is "Adequate" (under 70 points). Even slight straying in the ring shall cause some deduction from the Artistic Impression.
- Physical manipulation or forcing of the dog is not allowed. If the handler has to touch the dog in order to make it execute a move, the maximum score for Artistic Impression is "Adequate" (under 70 points).
- Irritable behavior of handler and forcefully given and/or unnecessarily loud commands, combined with unenthusiastic demeanor of dog, shall cause deductions in all aspects of scoring so that the maximum overall score is "Adequate" (under 140 points).
- If a dog barks excessively and repeatedly or otherwise makes noise, the maximum score for Artistic Impression is "Adequate" (under 70 points). Even intermittent, infrequent barking shall cause some deduction from the Artistic Impression.

#### Miscellaneous other deductions

The following list gives some examples of faults that a judge should observe while scoring a routine. The list is not exclusive, and each judge shall independently evaluate how much the performance is affected.

- dog disobeys handler's commands

- dog refuses to execute moves
- dog has trouble executing moves
- handler has trouble continuing the routine after an error
- uncertain or confused behavior of dog
- inaccurate heelwork
- handler gives commands in an unpleasantly forceful manner
- inappropriate conduct by handler
- handler or dog is clearly nervous, distracting from the routine
- not enough difficulty for the class (level)
- routine does not contain enough moves for the class (level)
- routine is too repetitive or not interesting to watch
- limited use of ring space
- too much heelwork in a Freestyle routine
- too many moves in a Heelwork to Music routine
- routine does not reflect variations in the music
- routine does not match the tempo and style of the music
- dog or handler is not moving to the rhythm of the music
- performance or interpretation of the dog or handler do not match the feel of the music
- handler attire does not match the theme of the routine

### Results, scores and points

The average score for both Technical Merit and Artistic Impression is calculated from the points given by the individual judges, and these are then summed to obtain the overall score.

- Excellent: 190.0 – 200.0 points
- Very good: 180.0 – 189.9 points
- Good: 160.0 – 179.9 points
- Satisfactory: 140.0 – 159.9 points
- Adequate: 100.0 – 139.9 points
- Inadequate: 72.0 – 99.9 points
- Poor: 0.0 – 71.9 points

- Disqualified: Unanimous decision by the panel of judges is always required.
- "Cannot be judged": A judge may refuse to judge a routine deemed inappropriate or offensive; the reason for this must also be stated.

### Honor Prize

Honor prize (HP) is given to a team whose average score for both Technical Merit and Artistic Impression is at least 80 points.

### **Freestyle category**

All moves that are safe for the dog are allowed. The routine must include a variety of moves suited for the skill level and class of the dog and handler. Judging and scoring shall emphasize the entirety of the routine more than individual moves. The routine should interpret the selected music and demonstrate the dog's abilities, attentiveness and willingness while the handler's movement fits seamlessly with the overall routine. Judging shall focus on cooperation, balance, and the intelligent use of moves that highlight the dog's skills. The age, construction and breed type of the dog shall be taken into account in judging.

In the higher classes the criteria and requirements shall be more demanding: the number of moves is greater, the command signals are increasingly discrete, and the importance of balance in the routine is more crucial.

Novice class:

- good contact between handler and dog for the most part of the routine
- routine includes 5–6 moves, preferably of different types

Open class:

- good contact between handler and dog
- routine includes about 10 different moves
- also includes some technically difficult moves, for example distance work

Advanced class:

- close, uninterrupted contact between handler and dog
- routine includes more than 10 moves
- also technically difficult moves included
- moves and combinations show originality and innovation
- routine also makes a distinct artistic impression

### Scoring

Maximum score is 200, consisting of Technical Merit (100 points) and Artistic Impression (100 points).

In Technical Merit the main focus is on the dog, but also the handler's movement shall be taken into account. For good Artistic Impression the team must clearly demonstrate their joy in working together, bonding, and the dog's obvious willingness to follow the handler's signals. Anything extra (props that have no immediate link to the theme, barking, etc.) shall cause deductions from the Artistic Impression score.

<p><b>Technical merit (quality and difficulty of moves) – 100 points</b></p>
<p>Number of moves – 50 points Score is primarily determined by the different types of moves: moves executed in one place and on the move, by dog and handler together or by dog alone, and variations of these. In addition to heelwork, the routine should preferably include also other moves, such as walking backward, spinning, jumps, crawling, rolls, walking on hind legs, and various paw movements.</p>
<p>Execution of moves – 50 points Reaction speed of dog, precision and flow of execution, and handler's movement; the breed of dog and the age of both handler and dog shall be observed.</p>
<p><b>Artistic impression (coordination, interaction and choreography) – 100 points</b></p>
<p>Coordination and interaction – 50 points Harmony of execution, the relationship and bond between handler and dog, and the obvious joy of presentation. How well the team and the routine match the music.</p>
<p>Choreography – 50 points Balance, structure and arrangement of routine, use of ring space. These aspects should reflect and emphasize the strengths of the cooperation between handler and dog.</p>

### **Heelwork to Music (HTM) category**

As indicated by the name, this is primarily heelwork to music and thus heelwork must make up at least 75% of the entire routine. At no point during the routine must the distance between handler and dog be more than 2m.

The interpretation of music should take precedence over the number of positions. The routine should not leave the spectator with the impression that the maximum number of positions are included only to show that the dog is able to execute them.

A routine that includes 1–2 high quality positions should be valued more highly than a routine with several imprecisely executed positions.

Moves should not dominate the routine; the main emphasis should be on heelwork. Various moves may be included as long as they match the music and heelwork makes up at least 75% of the routine.

### Heelwork

The following positions shall be considered heelwork:

- Dog on the left side of handler, right shoulder parallel with handler's left leg.
- Dog on the right side of handler, left shoulder parallel with handler's right leg.

- Dog between handler's legs, both shoulders parallel with handler's legs.
- Dog in front of handler, side to the handler.
- Dog behind handler, side to the handler.
- Dog and handler facing in opposite directions, dog's left shoulder parallel with handler's left leg.
- Dog and handler facing in opposite directions, dog's right shoulder parallel with handler's right leg.

The positions must remain the same throughout a move, without the dog having to jump, bounce or otherwise strain to keep the position.

The dog's body must be straight and parallel to the handler.

The front and hind legs of the dog must move in parallel lines, with the exception of sideways moves.

The dog must keep the same distance to the handler in all positions.

The dog must move at the same pace with the handler.

In the higher classes the criteria become stricter. The degree of difficulty is increased by varying positions, speed and direction of movement.

#### Novice class

- maximum distance between dog and handler is 2 meters
- heelwork makes up at least 75 % of the routine
- 1–2 good positions are enough

#### Open class

- maximum distance between dog and handler is 2 meters
- heelwork makes up at least 75 % of the routine

#### Advanced class

- maximum distance between dog and handler is 2 meters
- heelwork makes up at least 75 % of the routine
- several positions and changes of pace and direction are required

#### Scoring

Maximum score is 200, consisting of Technical Merit (100 points) and Artistic Impression (100 points).

In Technical Merit the main focus is on the dog, but also the handler's movement, flow, changes of speed and pace, etc. shall be taken into account. For good Artistic Impression the team must clearly demonstrate their joy in working together, bonding, and the dog's obvious willingness to follow the handler's signals. Anything extra (props that have no immediate link to the theme, barking, etc.) shall cause deductions from the Artistic Impression score.

<b>Technical merit (quality and difficulty of heelwork) – 100 points</b>
Number of heelwork positions and moves – 50 points Number of acceptable positions, number of moves, ratio of heelwork and moves, changes of pace and direction.
Execution of positions and moves – 50 points Precision, keeping the position throughout the performance, difficulty of positions, how dog reacts to handler's changes of rhythm. Precision and flow of execution, and handler's movement; the breed of dog and the age of both handler and dog shall be observed.
<b>Artistic impression (coordination, interaction and choreography) – 100 points</b>
Coordination and interaction – 50 points Harmony of execution, the relationship and bond between handler and dog, and the obvious joy of presentation. How well the team and the routine match the music.
Choreography – 50 points Balance, structure and arrangement of routine, use of ring space. These aspects should reflect and emphasize the strengths of the cooperation between handler and dog.

### **Special routines**

Special routines covers routines with more than one handler and dog (for example pairs, one handler with several dogs, or larger teams).

When judging special routines, the appropriate judging guidelines shall be followed as applicable. No Honor Prizes are given for special routines.