



MASSACHUSETTS SHEEP & WOOLCRAFT FAIR

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

Sheep Dog Trials

Trial Managers:

Kate Collins, George Northrop, 978-249-4407; george01368@yahoo.com

Wendy Warner, 413-743-4733, farmgirl.4@hotmail.com

Barbara Eriksson beriksson525@gmail.com

Eric Johnson, wildgoosechase4u@gmail.com

Denise Leonard, 413-773-5232; dleonard@schoolph.umass.edu

Trial will run May 24th, 25th and 26th, starting at noon on May 24 with Novice/Novice and Pro-Novice classes. Saturday and Sunday will be ranch, open, and USBCHA nursery.

For more information and entry, go to NEBCA.net, Trial Schedule.

About Sheep Dog Trials

A sheepdog trial is a test of the Border Collie and its training. A trial is designed to test all of the skills that a good farm or ranch dog needs to perform its daily work. To reach the level of training and skill required to successfully compete in a trial takes years of work on the part of both the dog and handler. Not only must the partners understand each other perfectly, but they must also out-guess and out-think unfamiliar sheep – moving them through an obstacle course with points lost for any error. This is the biggest departure from the dog's daily job of bringing the cows home to be milked or driving a flock of sheep to fresh pasture.

At most trials a judge watches each dog's performance and deducts points for any deviation from the ideal of the perfect run. Other trials are judged on a point system with the dog earning a specific number of points for each sheep put through each obstacle. Gripping or biting the sheep by a dog usually results in a disqualification of the dog. The dog should take the sheep through the course in a steady and efficient way, causing the sheep a minimum amount of anxiety.

While the rules may vary from trial to trial, most contain the following elements:

Each trial is set to a standard time for competitors:

Outrun – The handler and dog take their positions at the post. The dog is sent to either the left or the right to run the length of the field to where the sheep are being held. The dog must stay on the side of the field it was sent from until it is behind the sheep. The dog

should run wide enough not to disturb the sheep but should not waste time by going too wide. During the outrun each command from the handler will cost points.

Lift – This is the end of the outrun when the dog first makes contact with the sheep. The dog should approach the sheep in a calm and cautious manner without frightening the sheep so that they start moving directly toward the handler.

Fetch – The fetch should be straight from wherever the sheep are when the dog makes its lift to the handler. The sheep should move at a steady pace. The fetch ends when the sheep are around or behind the handler.

Drive – The dog is required to drive the sheep away from the handler in a straight line through a pair of gates on one side of the field, then straight across the field to a second pair of gates. From the second gates the sheep are brought to the pen.

Pen – At the end of the drive the handler may leave the post and go to the pen. The handler holds one end of a 6' rope tied to the gate and must confine his movements to the limit fixed by the rope. All of the sheep must be put in the pen and the gate closed. The handler may not touch any sheep with his hands, crook, or gate.

Shed – After completing the pen the handler shall proceed from the pen to the shedding area leaving the dog to bring the sheep from the pen. One sheep shall be separated from the others and driven away from the group by the dog to the judge's satisfaction.