Happy New Year to each of you in the NCA family! I sincerely hope that each of you and your families have enjoyed this festive season together in good health and blessed in many ways. As one year ends and another begins, I find myself reflecting upon the events of the past year. For NCA it has been a pivotal year with a healthy dose of change. I hope that these changes help us grow as we move forward into the future. The NCA will continue to innovate and develop our competitive and educational programs in order to serve you, our membership better.

When our founding Board President, Juan Reyes, left the board and his office, he related that his vision for the future of the NCA would be to “raise the bar”. That is exactly what I want for the NCA in the coming years as well. The size of the Open field this year in Afton will allow us to raise the bar in that competition. The intermediate handlers have improved greatly since the inception of that class, and the Open has room for progress as well. Our challenge as directors is to balance that challenge while keeping success attainable. “Raising the bar” is also the aim of the board’s promotion of field trials with open field regional competition and the field trial point multiplier idea. As a trainer, breeder, competitor, and leader within our organization what keeps me engaged is a continual striving and pursuit of excellence. What is static becomes stale and complacent. What the NCA has been able to achieve, albeit with a few bumps in the road, has been remarkable for an organization of our humble beginnings and youth. Most of those achievements have come as a result of innovations and openness to change. Change always has its detractors, the defenders of the status quo, and new ideas do need to be thoroughly thought out before implemented.

I would also like to see the NCA community as a whole progress in the area of showmanship and awareness of public perception of how we care for our dogs at public events. It looks unprofessional to have dogs tied unattended to fences away from our vehicles. Unattended dogs in public areas may not behave as their owners would hope in their absence. I have been to trials in the past year where handlers failed to clean up after their dogs waste in areas open to the public. We all need to be sure that we are good guests whether we are at a county fair or national event. I have also seen dogs left in locations where they could affect the livestock before or during the run. I don’t think that handlers at our events are doing these things out of ill will, but rather carelessness. Its affect upon the public to whom we present ourselves cannot help but be negative. Let’s all strive to do better, be more aware, and represent the NCA and the agricultural community well to the general public in the year to come.
NO ACTION TAKEN ON MANDATORY INTERMEDIATE MOVEUP

The intermediate move up rule changes that we have been pondering for some months was first on the agenda. The results of the survey showed that the membership believes dominant Intermediate handlers should move up into the Open class. NCA currently moves up the first and second point earning handlers and the first and second placing handlers and national finals. The formation of rules that make more handlers move up without forcing handlers who are not ready to compete in open has been a challenge we have not been able to overcome. It seems that some regions of the country have dominant handlers who do not get moved up by current NCA rules. Many NCA handler’s have chosen to move themselves up into Open competition of their own volition. The board commends these handlers for pushing to test themselves in the highest level of NCA competition. The board has chosen to not take action on changes to the intermediate move up rule at this time.

FIELD TRIAL POINT MULTIPLIER

The Field Trial Point Multiplier was discussed as well, and the board will continuing working on the details to make this work.

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO NATIONAL FINALS

The board is looking at making some changes to our finals. The two main issues discussed were the possible discontinuation of the Horseback class and changes in how we handle course design, handler meetings, and course director activities. It has been pointed out that the Horseback classes use a lot of time and energy at finals, and mainly give the top handlers another class in which to compete. That time could be used to create opportunities for even more handlers to participate in the finals. Horseback classes have been an important piece of the NCA finals. Tom's accident that occurred in Meeker this past year reminds us of the additional risk that Horseback events incur. For the past three finals our course committees have done an admirable job setting courses up and making our Finals work. The board wants to make the process more streamlined with better continuity and consistency between the classes. For 2017 the course design will be decided by the board, and courses will not be released prior to the Finals. This will allow more flexibility in course design during the event. Handler’s meetings and dispute resolution during the running will be handled by smaller teams as well. We hope that this will lead to better communication and a more professionally run event.

As always, if you have input on any of these or any other issues, please don’t hesitate to contact your directors.
For full board minutes reports, please visit the NCA website at http://nationalcattledog.com/board-minutes/

SPOTLIGHT ON THE NCA RULES

How are NCA points calculated?

The top 30% of dogs in a class will earn points. A class must have a minimum of 4 dogs. Point calculation example: 30 points are given for each dog in a class. A class with 8 dogs would be calculated as follows: 8 dogs x 30 points each = 240 total points for the class. The dog that placed 1st in this class will earn 240 points. You then subtract 100 points for each place thereafter until you can no longer subtract 100. So, 2nd place will earn 140 points and 3rd place will earn 40 points. The trial host does not need to calculate these points. NCA qualifying points will be calculated at the NCA office when the Trial results are received.
LOT A — HAZEL
3 year old registered Border Collie female.
Consigned by Jeff Mundorf, Red Oak, Iowa

LOT B — SLEEK
2 year old registered Border Collie male
Consigned by Bob Wagner, Nunn, Colorado

LOT C — MATT
3 year old registered Border Collie male
Consigned by Tim Gifford, Harrisburg, Nebraska

LOT D — PR JACE
2 year old registered Border Collie male
Consigned by Tanya Williams, Harrisburg, Nebraska

LOT E — SHYLO
19 month old registered Border Collie female
Consigned by Garland King, Capulin, New Mexico

LOT F — WINSTON
1 year old registered Border Collie male
Consigned by Heather Brandner, Yuma, Colorado

Sale Dogs will take part in a Preview on Thursday, January 19, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. The sale will take place on Saturday, January 21, 2017 at 1:00 p.m. Both events will also be available online at www.liveauctions.tv. Online bids will be taken, please sign up early to make sure you have the proper credentials and have your buyers number. A cattle dog clinic will be held following the sale. To view more information about sale dogs, please take a look at the full catalog at http://wagner-ranch.com/NWSS/mobile/index.html#p=1

JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

NATIONAL CATTLEDOG ASSOCIATION

Due on April 1 each year.
One year membership - $25.00
Five year membership - $100.00

Memberships may be paid by check, credit card or Paypal. For a direct link to the membership application, please visit our website at www.nationalcattledog.com/membershipapplication/

TRAINING TIP…

You’ll never learn to weld by letting someone else hold the rod.

Simply buying a great dog won’t make you a great handler. You have to handle the dog yourself in order to get better. This is true whether you’re breaking a puppy, or running in a trial competition. You can’t simply watch it happen, and know what to do. You have to get in and do it yourself, knowing that you’ll make mistakes along the way.

—Lyle East
This is a first in a series of articles about hosting a trial. The first one in the series deals with the cattle, 2nd one with the course/obstacles and the 3rd one with running the trial. These are only general suggestions as each trial has its own set of circumstances to deal with.

The cattle part of a trial is the most difficult to figure out. When you add weather changes (even sunny to cloudy, weather moving in, etc.) that can make a difference on how the cattle work, it’s all the more challenging. What will work for one group of cattle might not work for another, what will work one day may not work another day. We don’t know what experiences the cattle have had throughout their life that could affect their attitude to dogs and humans. We don’t have cattle that are clones of each other & have had the same experiences but we can do things that make for a better trial. The goal with the cattle is to have the cattle as even throughout the herd as you can. ‘Even’ as in their attitude and how they react to dogs and humans & even to each other.

Herd Selection

- Always work the cattle calmly and quietly, whether it be getting the cattle ready before a trial, loading & unloading them or at the trial.

- It would be nice to have fresh cattle for all classes plus a few extra, but most times that isn’t possible or are not available. If you can get enough cattle to run your biggest class without rerunning them, then that would be 2nd best. But even that isn’t always possible.

- If you do need to rerun cattle, try to avoid rerunning the cattle more than 3 times per day. So the very minimum number of cattle would be number of runs times 3 (if you are using 3 head per run) plus a few more as you would like to have a few left in the pen when you are done with runs. (More on that later.)

- Once you figure out how many you need or have to work with, expect to cull 15%-20% out of the herd, more if cattle aren’t use to being handled or wild (having cattle that have experiences with coyotes isn’t a good idea). Having ear tags helps with identifying the cattle but also may impede their line of vision. Keep in mind that the goal is to have the herd as even as possible as far as attitude to being worked and reacting to dogs and humans.

- It’s better to have the cattle together as a herd for some length of time. Avoid putting different groups of cattle together right before the trial. Give them time socialize with each other for a while, a month at least, ideally longer. You are trying to avoid having cattle that don’t want to be with each other and that is more likely to happen when they haven’t had enough time to socialize. When you are running 3 head, the incentive to stay with the other 2 may not be as strong as it is when it is in a herd where their buddies are.

- Cull out the ones with bad eyes, evil eye, lameness, high headed/spooky and any that are wanting to pick a fight, either with humans or dogs. If it doesn’t fit in attitude-wise with the rest of the herd, then it needs to go.

- Also, safety of the dogs and handlers needs to be top and foremost concern when culling cattle. Accidents do happen but don’t let it happen because a rouge cattle should have been culled and wasn’t. Even if it means culling it at the trial, it needs to be done.
Cattle Preparation

• One way to prepare the cattle is to put the group in a pen and just let the dogs naturally keep them herded, such as keeping them in a corner. If one comes out after the dogs, especially if it happens several times, then it needs to get culled. This teaches the cattle to keep together, that safety is with the rest. If they don’t learn that early, then cull them.

• Later work the herd in smaller groups, as many as 5-7 head at a time, moving the cattle around this time. Again, cull out any that are challenging the dog or humans. As you are able to work the cattle more times, make the group smaller each time you work them, to as few as 3 head. The smaller the group, the harder it is for the bad ones to hide.

• As you are working them in smaller groups, put them through some obstacles, such as wide fetch panels or even an open-ended pen. Keep the obstacles with wide openings so they go through them easily. This will weed out any that have had a bad experience and balk at going into a pen or through gates. The more you work them, the narrower the openings and spacing can be. This will also give you an idea of how to adjust the obstacles to the cattle when it comes time for the trial.

• Expose the cattle to both strong nose biters and strong heal biters. This gives them experience with both types of dogs they will see at the trial. The cattle need to respect the dog and these lessons should be given before the trial, not during the runs. If the cattle are being broke by a weaker dog, they will not respect the dog and thus want to challenge or ignore dogs during the trial. When that happens, the cattle are being taught a lesson during the run rather than before the trial. This eats up time during the run and may become more of a luck of the draw for the dog and handler.

• Also use dogs that will respect the cattle. If you use dogs that want to bite all the time or get into a fight with the cattle, eventually the cattle will just get fed up and want to fight, and fight every dog they come into contact with. If we want trials to see how well the dog fight with cattle, then we wouldn’t bother with setting up obstacles (and driving in those darn fence post).

• One sign of cattle needing more work is when the cattle are spooky, flighty, or high headed when walking around them.

• A sign of overworked cattle is when they don’t move off of you. If that is the case, give them a break from being worked.

• Broke cattle are when the cattle will react to the dog and/or handler presence, by moving & yielding to the dog/handler and can be kept under control. In other words, when they respect the dog & handler. There still may be some fighting but when there is a valid reason, such as an overly aggressive dog.

At the Trial

• At the trial, be sure they have water and, if an all-day trial, feed them hay (ask the owner of the cattle what kind of hay to feed them). Content cattle will make better cattle. We are asking a lot of these cattle so don’t give the cattle reasons to get into a bad mood.

• If the cattle aren’t used to the trial area, then let them into the area, allowing them to walk around and get comfortable. Also, take them through the obstacles, if possible, as a whole herd. Do this with the help and handlers or, if using dogs, ones that aren’t entered in the trial. One could argue that if using a trialing dog, it might give it an advantage when it comes to its run.

• Unless you have enough cattle to do the next class, bring in the worked cattle before each class and put all the cattle together, co-mingling the worked and unworked cattle. This could be done during the handler’s meeting (if you have enough help) to speed up the trial.
• If you need to bring in worked cattle during a class, then bring in the worked cattle after you have enough worked cattle plus the other cattle to finish the class including a few extra. Don’t bring in the cattle that have just run or even the last 2 runs, give them time to recover. (This can be done either at the set-out area if there are enough pens to keep the next 1 or 2 groups from the rest, or in the exhaust area.) Bring in the cattle & co-mingle both groups. It is hopeful that each run after that will have a mix of worked and unworked cattle.

• You may not want to finish the class with no cattle left to run. Cattle are more comfortable with other cattle and if there are just a few left in the set-out pens, then they may get nervous and flighty before their time to run. 3 head by themselves without distractions are more likely to get nervous than the 3 on the course, as they have a 4-legged intelligent animal to keep them occupied!

Again, each trial has its own circumstances, work with what you have. Try to keep everything you do fair and even for each run. It's not always possible but work to make it as fair as possible.

The next article will focus on the course, including the obstacles, setting out the cattle and how to adjust the course to the cattle.

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Turn the cattle to the same side as the entrance wing is on. That way, the dog has an easier route to block the cattle.

This obstacle can be used in a corner, but may need to tarp the fence to keep cattle from being disturbed by activity on the other side of the fence.

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NCA NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

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If you would like to submit an article, news from your region, idea for an obstacle, or any other material for consideration in the newsletter, please submit them to Lori at xplori@hotmail.com.
New Year’s Resolutions – from a Dog’s Viewpoint

Dogs for ages have tried to figure out what their owners want. From a dog’s perspective, humans can be rather mind-boggling to decipher, but here are a few New Year’s resolutions the dogs may have in mind.

by Patty Koller

Knip from Chew Valley will try to quit getting that last unnecessary bite in during a run even though it will significantly shorten the quality time with his handler and cattle.

Muck from Mud Flats vows to trying harder to keep clean.

Belle from Southern Oak has the opposite problem, she vows to be more willing to run through the mud rather than taken the path less filthy even though it will be a major setback to her manicure.

Leap from Faith vows to quit jumping up on people, dusty paws on black yoga pants shows up really good.

Turn & Zoom from Daytona will learn to drive the pickup through gates as the owner opens & closes it. Turn has the steering wheel and Zoom will work the gas pedal (& maybe the brake). This should speed things up as this issue with the gates just takes way too long. Those cattle are waiting, you know.

Fear from Night Falls vows to be braver and bark at any unusual sounds he hears at night so he can alert his sleeping owner of any potential dangers lurking out there. Fear has noticed his owner has terrible hearing (especially when the owner makes that funny noise during the night) so he hopes his owner can sleep better with that peace of mind knowing Fear is on the watch.

Plow from Dirt Plains plans on doing a better job figuring out where her owner is planting flowers and shrubs so she can have the holes already dug in the right place when her owner is ready to plant.

Hunt from Rabbit Hole vows to deliver the dead animals he has caught to the front door rather than the back door. The gifts haven’t been well received when delivered to the back door so Hunt figures delivering them to the front door will do the trick as it works for the gifts the UPS man drops off.

Nix from Repel wants to do a better job of telling the difference between a wanted guest and a traveling salesman. He gets the impression that the traveling salesmen aren’t necessarily welcome and he is hoping to earn some greatly needed points by keeping them away.

Blue from Curtis pledges show his canine smile every morning as everyone should start the day with a smile.