

Open

- Any dog of any age may compete in the NCA Open class.
- Any handler may compete in the NCA Open class.
- A handler who has competed in any Open cattle class is no longer eligible to compete in the NCA Intermediate or NCA Novice class.
- Dogs who have competed in an Open class may not be eligible to compete in some non-sanctioned classes at some trials. Please check with the trial host to determine class eligibility before running.

Nursery

For the 2024-2025 qualifying year, Nursery eligible dogs must have been born after October 1, 2021.

- Eligibility for the NCA Nursery class is determined by the age of the dog. Only dogs that are younger than 30 months at the start of the qualifying year (April 1) are eligible to compete in the Nursery class for that year.
- To compete in the 2025 NCA Regional Finals and the 2025 NCA National Finals, Nursery eligible dogs must have been born after October 1, 2021.
- Any handler may compete in the NCA Nursery class.
- Points determination for the Nursery class:
 - Points for the Nursery class are determined based on the class size, including ineligible dogs.
 - Ineligible dogs will not receive points, but eligible dogs will receive credit for all dogs that they place above in the class.

Intermediate

To be eligible to compete in the NCA Intermediate class, a handler must have received no points in a sanctioned Open trial before April 1, 2012 and must not compete in Open cattle class after April 1, 2012.

- Dogs of any age may compete in the NCA Intermediate class.
- An Intermediate handler/dog team may compete in any class, except Open, for which the dog is eligible.
- NCA Intermediate class points are awarded to the handler/dog team.

- An NCA Intermediate handler may acquire a dog of any level at any time during the qualifying year and make that dog part of his/her Intermediate team.
- Because any NCA Intermediate points earned are assigned only to that handler/dog team, any NCA Intermediate points earned by a dog in the NCA Intermediate class are not transferable to another Intermediate handler.
- A dog that is part of an intermediate team may not be run in any class by an Open handler or by another Intermediate handler. However, that dog may be run in a Novice class by any Novice handler without penalty to the Intermediate team.
- If an NCA Intermediate handler allows an Open handler or another Intermediate handler to run a dog in their team in ANY class during the qualifying year, then the following will apply:
 - The team will forfeit any NCA Intermediate points earned up to that date.
 - The Intermediate team is disqualified from earnings points for the remainder of the qualifying year.
 - The Intermediate team is no longer eligible to compete in the Intermediate class at that year's NCA Regional Finals or NCA National Finals.
- Intermediate handlers may move up from Intermediate to Open at any time during the qualifying year. If they elect to do so, the following will apply:
 - Once they have run in an Open cattle class, they may not move back down to earn NCA Intermediate points.
 - Any NCA Intermediate points earned up to that date will be forfeited and that handler may not earn any further NCA Intermediate points.
 - They are no longer eligible to compete in the Intermediate class at that year's NCA Regional Finals or NCA National Finals.
- At the end of a qualifying year, the top two NCA Intermediate point earning handlers are no longer eligible for the NCA Intermediate class.
- At the conclusion of the NCA National Finals, that year's Champion and Reserve Champion Intermediate handlers are no longer eligible for the NCA Intermediate class.
- Beginning in the 2022 NCA National Finals, any Intermediate handler who qualifies for the final round of the NCA Finals Nursery class is no longer eligible for the NCA Intermediate class.
- If an Intermediate handler is moved out of Intermediate by rule in a local association, the NCA will honor that move-up beginning in the next qualifying year. At that time, that handler will no longer be eligible for the NCA Intermediate class.

- If it is determined that a handler has run in an NCA Intermediate class who is not eligible for that class, that handler will be removed from the class results and not counted in the points calculation for that Intermediate class.

Novice

- The NCA Novice class is limited to handlers who are not competing in the Open cattle class.
- NCA Novice class points are awarded to the handler/dog team.
- Any dog with any eligible handler may compete in the NCA Novice class.
- More than one handler may run the same dog in the NCA Novice class at the same trial without penalty to either handler.
- More than one handler may run the same dog in the NCA Novice class at the same trial without penalty to either handler.
- It is not required that the trial host allow more than one Novice handler to run the same dog in their Novice class. If it is allowed by the trial host, only one of those handler/dog teams will be eligible to earn NCA Novice points from that class. However, all of the handlers/dog teams in the class will count toward the class total when points are calculated and assigned.
- Handlers will earn NCA Novice points and are eligible to compete in both the NCA Regional Finals and the NCA National Finals at the end of the qualifying year.
- Handlers may not earn points in both NCA Novice and NCA Intermediate classes in the same qualifying year.
- If a Novice handler elects to compete in an NCA Intermediate class, they will not lose any NCA Novice points earned up to that point and they will not jeopardize their NCA Novice eligibility. (Whether a Novice handler is allowed to compete in the Intermediate class is determined by the individual trial host, not the NCA.)
- If a Novice handler elects to compete in any Open cattle class, they will lose any NCA Novice points earned up to that point and they will no longer be eligible to compete in the NCA Novice or NCA Intermediate classes. Once done, this cannot be reversed.
- If a trial host allows handlers to run in both Novice and Intermediate classes, the handler will only earn NCA points for the class they currently have declared with the NCA office.
- It is the handler's responsibility to ensure that their information on file with the NCA office is current and correct before they run at a trial

- A Novice handler may move up to Intermediate or Open at any time during the qualifying year. If they elect to do so, the following will apply:
 - They will forfeit any NCA Novice points earned up to that date.
 - The team is disqualified from earning NCA Novice points for the remainder of the qualifying year.
 - They are no longer eligible to compete in the NCA Novice class at that year's NCA Regional Finals or NCA National Finals.
- If a Novice handler elects to move up to the NCA Intermediate class at any time during the qualifying year, it is their responsibility to declare their intent BEFORE going to the post in order to award any NCA Intermediate points.
- At the end of a qualifying year, the top two NCA Novice point earning handlers are no longer eligible for the NCA Novice class.
- At the conclusion of the NCA National Finals, that year's Champion and Reserve Champion Novice handlers are no longer eligible for the NCA Novice class.
- Beginning with the the 2024 NCA National Finals, any Novice handler who qualifies for the final round of the NCA Nursery Finals class is no longer eligible for the NCA Novice or NCA Intermediate class.
- If a Novice handler is moved out of Novice by rule in a local association, the NCA will honor that move-up beginning in the next qualifying year. At that time, that handler will no longer be eligible for the NCA Novice class.
- If it is determined that a handler has run in an NCA Novice class who is not eligible for that class, that handler will be removed from the class results and not counted in the points calculation for that NCA Novice class.

1st Year Novice

In addition to rules in the 'Novice' section, the following rules apply to first year Novice handlers:

- Handlers in their first year of competition in the NCA Novice class receive a one-year free membership in the NCA.
- After the end of their first qualifying year, a membership must be purchased in order for the handler to continue to earn NCA Novice points, to compete in an NCA Regional Final, or to compete in the NCA National Finals.

- If a first year Novice handler elects to compete in the Intermediate class and wishes to earn NCA Intermediate points, they must purchase a membership before NCA Intermediate points will be awarded.
- If a first year Novice handler elects to move up to the Intermediate class, it is their responsibility to declare their intent to move to the NCA Intermediate class **BEFORE** going to the post in order to award any NCA Intermediate points.