

# National Finals

- The National Finals will be held each year.

Handlers and dogs qualify for the NCA National Finals by earning points at NCA sanctioned trials throughout the qualifying year. Typical end of the qualifying year is March 30<sup>th</sup> but may vary from year to year based on when the finals are held.
- Handlers who are NCA members may earn points to qualify dogs for the NCA National Finals in the Open, Nursery, Intermediate, Horseback and Novice classes in any NCA sanctioned trial held during that qualifying year.
- Accumulated points for handlers and dogs are posted on the NCA website in the 'Points/National Points' section of the main menu.
- Handlers are limited to two (2) dogs per class in the NCA National Finals unless board votes to allow more.
- Entries for each are accepted in the order of points earned throughout the qualifying year, until the class limit is met. After a class is filled, a waiting list will be started and any withdrawals will be filled from the waiting list entries in the order of points earned for each class until the class is again full or the waiting list is exhausted.
- Handlers must be current NCA members to enter and compete in the NCA National Finals.
  - The NCA online membership application is available under forms on the website and offers online payment of the membership fee.
  - The application is also available to be downloaded and printed, to be mailed with payment to the NCA office. The form can be found under forms on the web page or members can contact the NCA office.
- Finals courses are all points and time.
- The top 40% of dogs in each class, based on sum of scores in two preliminary runs, will qualify for the final round. In the event of tie scores from the combined first two rounds, the dog/team with the fastest combined times will be taken to the final round.
- Class champions are determined by cumulative scoring, i.e. the sum of scores from all three rounds of competition.
- If there is a tie in scores, it will be broken by using the cumulative time from all three rounds of competition.
- If a tie still remains, it will be broken by the placings in the final run.

- The number of entries for each class may fluctuate from year to year depending various factors. If you need more information about class sizes at the NCA National Finals, please call a Board member for clarification.

- Contestants must be ready to run in their designated positions. Failure to respond when called upon may result in disqualification. The running order will be strictly followed unless a change is approved by the trial host or trial committee. Contestants must run their designated dog in their assigned position in the running order. Running the wrong dog or running out of the assigned order without authorization may result in disqualification. The trial host and trial committee cannot guarantee the exact time a contestant will run.

- **Open Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Open dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA National Finals Open class with any dog that has earned points in an Open class during the qualifying year.
- If an NCA Novice or an NCA Intermediate handler elects to enter and run an Open qualified dog in the Open class at the NCA National Finals, they are no longer eligible for either the NCA Novice or the NCA Intermediate classes.

- **Nursery Class**

- Only dogs that are younger than 30 months at the start of the typical qualifying year (April 1<sup>st</sup>) are eligible to compete in the Nursery class.
- Proof of age will be required when dog is entered for the NCA Finals Nursery class.
- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Nursery dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA Nursery class with any Nursery age dog that has earned points in an NCA Nursery class during the qualifying year.
- A qualified Nursery dog may compete in both the Open and Nursery classes at the NCA National Finals.

- Beginning in the 2026-2027 trial year, any Intermediate or Novice handler who finishes in the top 5 overall in the final round of the NCA Finals Nursery class is no longer eligible for their current class rank...i.e. Novice will be advanced to Intermediate and Intermediate will be advanced to Open

- **Intermediate Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Intermediate handler/dog team dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA National Finals Intermediate class with any eligible dog whom they have earned points in an Intermediate class during the qualifying year.
- The handler/dog team that competes in the NCA National Finals Intermediate class must be the same team that earned the qualifying points during the year. ONLY that handler may run that dog in the NCA National Finals Intermediate Class and no other handler may run that dog in any other NCA National Finals 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 with the 2026-2027 trial year, any Intermediate handler who finishes in the top 5 overall in the final round of the NCA Nursery Finals class is no longer eligible for the NCA Intermediate class and will be advanced to the Open class.

- **Novice Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Novice handler/dog team throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA National Finals Novice class with any eligible dog whom they have earned points in an NCA Novice class during the qualifying year.
- The handler/dog team that competes in the NCA National Finals Novice class must be the same team that earned the qualifying points during the year.
- 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 2026-2027 trial year, any Novice handler who finishes in the top 5 overall in the final round of the NCA Nursery Finals class is no longer eligible for the NCA Novice class and will be advanced to the intermediate class.

- **Horseback Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Horseback dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler of any class may enter to compete in the NCA National Finals Horseback class with any dog that has earned points in a Horseback class during the qualifying year.
- Competing in, or winning Champion or Reserve Champion, in the NCA National Finals Horseback class will not require an Intermediate handler to move to the Open class.

## Regional Finals

- The NCA is divided into six different regions and sponsors a Regional Finals in each. The dates may vary for each region, but they are all held each year after the end of the qualifying year and before the NCA National Finals.
- Not all regions will have a Regional Finals, that will depend up whether an application is submitted for a region, and on approval by the board.
- Competitors qualify for an NCA Regional Final by earning NCA points in trials held within that region.
- Handlers and dogs may qualify for the NCA Regional Finals in multiple regions.
- Accumulated points for each region are posted on the NCA website towards the end of the qualifying year in the 'Points/Regional Points' section of the main menu.
- Handlers who are NCA members may earn points to qualify dogs for the NCA Regional Finals in the Open, Nursery, Intermediate, Horseback and Novice classes.
- Handlers must be current NCA members to enter and compete in the NCA Regional Finals.

- NCA Regional Finals Champions in all classes are automatically qualified for the NCA National Finals. If there are more than 10 dogs in a class at an NCA Regional Finals, the Reserve Champion in that class is also automatically qualified for the NCA National Finals.
- Handlers are limited to two (2) dogs per class in the NCA Regional Finals.
- The number of dogs to run in each class in the NCA Regional Final is determined by the trial host.
- The trial format and course rules are determined by the trial host.
- Nursery dogs must be eligible to compete in the upcoming NCA National Finals in order to be eligible for the NCA Regional Finals.
- Intermediate and Novice handlers must be eligible to compete in the upcoming NCA National Finals in order to be eligible for the NCA Regional Finals. For both the NCA Novice and NCA Intermediate classes, the handler's declared level at the end of the qualifying year determines their class eligibility for NCA Regional Finals.
- An NCA Regional Final may be held in conjunction with another trial, but it is not required to be. If the trial is solely an NCA Regional Final, the name of the trial should be: "NCA (name of region) (year) Regional Finals".
- Not all classes must be offered at an NCA Regional Final. If all of the available classes are to be offered in a region, they are not required to all be held on the same date or at the same location.
- Trial hosts may award such monetary and other prizes as they deem appropriate and may charge appropriate entry fees.
- The NCA will provide buckles for all class Champions held in each NCA Regional Final.
- There are no NCA sanctioning fees for NCA Regional Finals.
- Trial hosts interested in holding an NCA Regional Final must submit a sanctioning application to the NCA office at least two weeks before the desired date of the NCA Regional Final. The sanctioning application is available on the webpage under forms, or from the NCA office.
- The NCA Board of Directors will review and approve all applications for NCA Regional Finals. When there are multiple applicants from a single region, the Board will select the site for the NCA Regional Final.
- Listed below are the outlines of each class offered at the NCA Regional Finals. The number of entries for each class in each region are determined by the trial host, as is the trial format.

If you need more information about the classes at an NCA Regional Final, please call the trial host for clarification.

- **Open Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by Open dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in an NCA Regional Final Open class with any dog that has earned points in an Open class in that region during the qualifying year.
- If an NCA Novice or an NCA Intermediate handler elects to enter and run an Open qualified dog in the Open class at an NCA Regional Final, they are no longer eligible for either the NCA Novice or the NCA Intermediate classes.

- **Nursery Class**

- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Nursery dog throughout the qualifying year.
- Any handler may enter to compete in an NCA Regional Final Nursery class with any Nursery age dog that has earned points in an NCA Nursery class in that region during the qualifying year.
- A qualified Nursery dog may compete in both the Open and Nursery classes at the NCA Regional Finals.

- **Intermediate Class**

- Any handler may enter to compete in an NCA Regional Final Intermediate class with any eligible dog with whom they have earned points in an Intermediate class in that region during the qualifying year.
- Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Intermediate handler/dog team throughout the qualifying year.
- The handler/dog team that competes in an NCA Regional Final Intermediate class must be the same team that earned the qualifying points during the year. ONLY that handler may run that dog in an NCA Regional Final Intermediate Class and no other handler may run that dog in any other NCA Regional Final class, except the Novice Regional Final class.

- **Horseback Class**
  - Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Horseback dog throughout the qualifying year.
  - Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA National Finals Horseback class with any dog that has earned points in a Horseback class during the qualifying year.
- **Novice Class**
  - Any handler may enter to compete in the NCA Regional Final Novice class with any eligible dog with whom they have earned points in a Novice class in that region during the qualifying year.
  - Entries are accepted in the order of points earned by the Novice handler/dog team throughout the qualifying year.
  - The handler/dog team that competes in an NCA Regional Final Novice class must be the same team that earned the qualifying points during the year.

# Finals Code of Conduct

## Standards of Conduct for the NCA National Finals

### The following are not permitted at the NCA National Finals:

- Inappropriate language or conduct, including social media, directed at the judge, trial secretary, timekeeper, course director, board directors or any other trial official. The handler may be given a warning from the judge, course director or trial management. Handlers may contact the course director in a courteous manner for a clarification of a rule or the accuracy of a score sheet in a timely manner that does not interfere with the competition. The maximum penalty that a judge or course director may impose is single run disqualification.
- Inappropriate language or conduct, including social media, directed at fellow event participants or spectators. All competitors and NCA members are expected to show exemplary sportsmanship at all times. An allegation of improper use of language or conduct toward participants and/or spectators reported within 24 hours of the occurrence will be investigated by the NCA directors and appropriate penalties imposed.
- Attempting to aid by coaching or distracting another competitor while they are competing. A person attempting to aid by coaching or distract another competitor will be given a warning

from the judge, course director or an NCA director. Failure to comply after the warning may result disqualification or other penalty. If the individuals providing aid to a competitor are not themselves a competitor, they may be expelled from the current event and/or banned from future events.

- Tampering with or attempting to alter competition livestock, the draw, and/or trial course facilities. The NCA directors will investigate allegations of tampering with the livestock, the draw, and course facilities and impose appropriate penalties.
- Inhumane treatment of dogs or livestock on the trial field or grounds
- Penalties for violations may include a warning, the loss of points, disqualification of specific run, expulsion from the event, forfeiture of all entry fees and prize monies, voiding of membership privileges, and/or any other sanctions deemed appropriate the NCA Board of Directors. Every effort should be made by the NCA Board of Directors carefully investigate and consult with all parties involved in each case prior to imposing penalties.
- Contestants must be ready to run in their designated positions. Failure to respond when called upon may result in disqualification. The running order will be strictly followed unless a change is approved by the trial host or trial committee. Contestants must run their designated dog in their assigned position in the running order. Running the wrong dog or running out of the assigned order without authorization may result in disqualification. The trial host and trial committee cannot guarantee the exact time a contestant will run.