

PINE RIVERS DOG TRAINING CLUB

Preparing and Handling Odour for Scent Work Trials

The correct handling of odour is essential and, unless there is a club member who is experienced in preparing scent aids for trials, it is strongly recommended that our club negotiate with the judge to provide the pre-scented scent aids, scent vessels and other scent-related supplies.

The following advice is provided to assist the club, should it be decided to provide the odour, scent aids, scent vessels and other supplies.

THE OILS

There are four (4) specific essential oils used as odour sources in ANKC Scent Work trials. These odours may be used in any Division, Class or Element in the trial.

Ensure that your oils are 100% pure and that they are the correct species. Check the scientific name when you order. You may need to shop around because not all suppliers stock all four odours.

Sweet Birch – Betula Lenta

Anise - Pimpinella Anisum

Clove Bud - Eugenia Caryophyllata

Cypress - Cupressus Sempevirens

STORING ODOUR

Oils don't 'go off', but the chemical makeup may change as the volatile chemicals evaporate, altering the smell. Oil degradation may be caused by oxygen, heat and light.

Once purchased, essential oils must be stored in an air-tight container in a cool, dark place where scent work dogs never visit. Exposing dogs to odour when not actively searching will diminish their drive to find the target odour.

SCENT AIDS

The 'scent aid' is the odour source for the dog to find. It must ALWAYS be enclosed in a 'scent vessel' or 'hide' when it is placed in the search area.

Scent aids are cotton balls or cotton buds (q-tips) that have been infused with the scent of the oil. The oil never touches the scent aid.

Only use cotton buds with paper stems. Plastic or bamboo stems are not permitted.

Cotton buds (with cotton on both ends) should be cut in half and the stem trimmed so they fit into small scent vessels.

Scent aids must always be stored in glass, not plastic, containers.

SCENT VESSELS

A scent vessel may be any small container that prevents the scent aid from coming into direct contact with any object or surface in the search area, but also allows scent to escape.

Examples of scent vessels include plastic tubing, lip balm tube with holes in it, small metal tins with holes, tea infusers, key safe with holes in it. As long as it prevents the scent aid from contaminating the search area, and allows scent to escape, and can be placed in the hide so that it is not visible to the dog or handler, there is no restriction on the selection of scent vessels.

Scent aids may be placed in plastic scent vessels for immediate use, but should never be stored in plastic scent vessels.

For safety reasons a scent vessel must never contain glass.

OTHER SCENT-RELATED ITEMS

Rule 17.3.1 states that “The scent vessel or container may be affixed to an object or surface with tape, adhesive or by any other method, so long as it does not harm the object or surface.”

Some products to consider are putty-like pressure-sensitive adhesives such as Blu Tack (or similar), double-sided tape, duct tape or rare-earth magnets.

Be aware that products such as Blu Tack, although reusable, absorb odour and should be disposed of after a single use. They should not be stored with other equipment that may have come into contact with odour.

ODOUR STRENGTH

ANKC use the ‘odour absorption’ method, where oil never directly contacts the cotton bud or cotton ball used as the scent aid. Instead, two (2) drops of oil are placed on a cotton ball (carrier) and the cotton buds (q-tips) are placed in a sealed jar with the carrier and absorb the volatile chemicals.

A ‘drop’ is .05 ml – a basic glass eye dropper that holds one 1 ml contains 20 drops.

It is essential that the strength of odour in Scent Work trials is as predictable and consistent as possible (bearing in mind that fixing agents, environmental factors and time variables will always apply). While handlers may choose to train on a variety of strengths of odour, scent aids used in trials must be prepared strictly according to the recommended method and quantities defined in the Rules.

Rule 17.1: *To prepare the scent aids for trial, ONE cotton ball should be used as a carrier vial. This cotton ball is NOT to be used as a hide in the trial, but merely acts as an infuser vessel. This ball should have 2 drops of oil dripped onto it (do not allow the vial to touch the cotton ball) and be placed in the bottom of an air tight 250ml glass jar. Into this jar should be placed 30 cotton balls or pre-cut q-tips. Once complete, the jar should be made air tight, shaken vigorously and left to stand in a cool dark place for 48 hours.*

HIDES

Rule 2.0 Definitions: *“Hide”:* An instance of the target odour within a search area. Depending on the class level and Element, the search area may have multiple hides. A hide will consist of odour on a scent aid placed in a scent vessel which may be concealed in a container.

It is recommended that the judge be requested to provide the scent vessels, holding the scent aids, for the trial. If this does not occur, the hide steward will make up the scent vessels, as well as position them to create the hides, under the direction of the judge on the day of the trial. However, this will take up more preparation time which should be factored into the timeline for the trial.

PREPARING SCENT AIDS

Preparation of the scent aids should take place at least 48 hours (and preferably several days) before the trial.

You will need:

- **100% pure essential oil - one odour per jar of cotton tips**
- **Glass eye dropper or pipette (plastic will react with the oil)**
- **Cotton buds with paper stems and cotton on both ends**
- **Cotton balls**
- **250ml clean glass jar with screw top lid**
- **Non-powdered latex or nitrile disposable gloves**
- **Secateurs or kitchen scissors/shears**
- **Clean plastic bucket, tub or bag**

1. Wash your hands and rinse well. Dry them with a clean paper towel.
2. Cover the work area with plastic, gift wrapping paper or newspaper. This must be disposed of in the outside wheelie-bin when you have finished.
3. Put on the disposable gloves.
4. Hold the cotton buds in the centre of the stem and cut each end just above the cotton tip. To prevent the tips from shooting off as they're cut, cut them into the plastic bag or tub. If any fall on the floor they are contaminated and should be disposed of with the remaining stem.
5. Cut 15 cotton buds which will provide you with 30 cotton tips.
6. Place cut cotton tips into the glass jar.
7. Put two drops of oil onto a cotton ball.
8. Place the cotton ball in the jar with the cotton tips. Shake the jar and allow to 'cook' for at least 48 hours.

9. Remove the cover from the work area and then remove your gloves by turning them inside out on your hands. Dispose of the gloves with the cover in the outside wheelie bin where they are inaccessible to your dog.
10. Give the jar another shake from time to time during the 48 hour 'cooking time'.
11. Store the jar in a cool, dark place where scent work dogs never visit.

PLACING SCENT AIDS IN SCENT VESSELS

New scent vessels must be used in a trial.

This task can be time consuming and it is recommended that you negotiate with the judge to provide the pre-loaded scent vessels as well as directing the hide steward in the placement of the hides.

The selection of scent vessels, the number of scent aids to be placed in each scent vessel and the location of the hides will be determined by the judge taking into account the many variables that will impact the dogs' searches, eg. weather conditions (wind, humidity, temperature) and whether the location of the hide will be indoors, outdoors; accessible, inaccessible; high or low placement etc.

The hide steward is the only person to handle odour on the day of the trial and will do so at the direction of the judge.