

MRC Carting Test

By Marianne Noble

MRC Carting Chair and Course Director

It was a great day for the working dog! October 7 was unseasonably warm and sunny, matching the mood of the dogs and handlers who assembled on the paved midway outside Robinson Hall at the Kane County Fairgrounds for the debut of Carting as part of the 2015 Medallion Rottweiler Club Specialty.

Though classified as working dogs, Rottweilers are not often challenged to demonstrate their propensity and ability to do a job. The Rottweilers in the Middle Ages knew how to shoulder responsibility: they helped herd livestock, drew carts laden with slabs of meat to market, and proudly toted the butcher's purse, hung around their neck for safekeeping from robbers on the trip home.

Like their 16th century ancestors, today's Rottweilers are born carters. On October 7, they strutted their stuff at MRC's first ARC sanctioned Carting Test.

Fifteen dog-handler teams had pre-entered for 25 runs. Ann Felske-Jackman and SOLA! came from Canada; Francie Delony and Elise travelled from North Carolina and Judy Barker and Olive from New Jersey. Mike Houy and Morgen and Teresa Schneider and Cyrus came down from Wisconsin. The Illinois contingent included Brenda Moore and Gunny, Tracy McMahon and Reno, Eleanor Jackson and Elsa, Shelley Colbert and Noah, Rich Spetka and Grant, Sharon Cierniak and Jet, and Christine Bowers and Rainin Mischief and Thunder Down Under II.

Some handlers had years of carting experience while others had never even seen a carting test before. A group of local folks had been getting together for nearly a year, starting from scratch, to learn and practice their new skills in a group setting.

Several of the carting dogs, already solid obedience performers, had been introduced to the cart just a few weeks prior to the test and surprised their owners by stepping between the shafts and pulling as though they'd been doing it their whole lives. Most entrants were Rottweilers, but we welcomed two Nottweilers, GSDs, into the field. Juno Noble met her brace partner, Olive, for their one and only practice session the day before the trial in the hotel parking lot! They licked face and then got right to work, just like working dogs should. The fun, camaraderie, support and group spirit were evident throughout the day.

A Carting Test is similar to Rally Obedience, but without the jumps. The course is designed to challenge the teams to maneuver through elements such as 360 degree turns right and left, figure 8's, distractions, 3-foot backup, serpentines, gates, and a bridge. Like Rally, the handler can talk to the dog. In carting, you may work on either side of the dog or in front. While various breeds each offer their own Carting Tests, American Rottweiler Club offers six possible carting

titles: Carting Started-Single (on lead), Carting Intermediate-Single (off lead), Carting Excellent Single (driving). The same three divisions are offered for brace (team of two dogs).

Dr. Tommy Caisango, ARC Board Member and ARC Carting Committee Chair, served as our judge this year. He did an excellent job of putting all handlers at ease as he briefed them before the trial, walking the course and explaining judging and scoring criteria. Francine Lee and Joan Mazat were Ring Stewards, bringing carts to the Start for each handler and assisting those who needed help loading the mandatory 40 pound weight into the carts. Karen Haberkorn was our Test Secretary, handling all the entries and kept the table running smoothly.

As homage to the Rottweiler's heritage, the top prize of the day was The Butcher's Purse, an embroidered leather pouch filled with chocolate coins and dog treats, awarded to the highest scoring teams in single and brace.

To no one's surprise, Tracy McMahon and Reno scored High in Test with a perfect 200 score, garnering MRC's first Butcher's Purse. With this accomplishment, she added to the long list of working titles she's earned with her dogs. A master of canine communication, Tracy has guided six Rottweilers to eighty-three working titles, including OTCH with Reno. Successful teamwork, according to Tracy, results from choosing activities both you and your dog enjoy. Carting certainly fit that bill for her and Reno.

Good carting, she feels, is based on a solid obedience foundation in a stable tempered dog. It is paramount that the dog trusts you as his handler. With that trust bond, he will pull the cart without fear or hesitation. As far as training goes, Tracy tries to keep her training sessions short and motivational using plenty of food and toys, always ending the session before the dog gets bored. There is no faster way to un-motivate your dog than overtraining and drilling exercises. Less is sometimes more.

Brenda Moore is an experienced carter, but had never entered a carting test before. She and Gunny collared three new titles at the MRC Carting Test, including Reserve High in Test. She was the only competitor to drive the course this year.

Dr. Judith Barker came from New Jersey for the MRC Carting Test and stayed for several other events in the Specialty. She skillfully maneuvered new besties, Olive and Juno, through the sixteen element course for Carting Started Team and Carting Intermediate Team, earning her fourth and fifth (of six possible) Carting Titles. Exhausted but satisfied, she took home the Butcher's Purse for high score in Team entries.

The Carting Test was a resounding success for MRC and the inaugural class of happy working dogs and handlers. Francine Lee created an excellent YouTube slideshow which captured the spirit of the Carting Test at <http://tinyurl.com/qf4cmuc>. Pending Board approval, we plan to offer Carting at next year's Specialty on Wednesday, October 12, 2016. Plan to join us!