



Edition 3, July 10, 2020, BARRC Education Committee

We're switching gears a bit for this edition of the education newsletter – away from health issues which I think we have all had enough of for a while – and on to performance events. For the next few editions, we'll be covering a different performance event with information on what it is, how to do it, how to enter and other helpful tips on enjoying performance activities with your dog. Because BARRC is sponsoring our very first Fast CAT event on July 18, 2020, we thought we'd start out with Fast Cats. Many thanks to Carol Vesely for her contribution to the newsletter this month and the ideas for future newsletters! - Wendy Peirce, Editor and Chair, BARRC Education Committee

Fast CAT – let's see those Ridgebacks run!

Contributed by Carol Vesely

With the Bay Area Rhodesian Ridgeback Club's first all-breed Fast CAT event rapidly approaching, we thought it would be timely to start the performance education series with Fast CATs for those of you who may not have done it before. Fast CATs can be fun for both you and your dog and it doesn't really take any special equipment or preparation to enter or compete. So, with the help of this article, we hope to see you at the BARRC Fast CAT on July 18th!

So, What is Fast CAT You Ask?

Fast CAT is an AKC event where the dog runs a 100-yard dash for time. The CAT in Fast CAT stands for Coursing Ability Test. The purpose of a Fast CAT is to provide all dogs and their owners an enjoyable, healthy activity in which they can participate. Dogs run singularly which is great for dogs that don't run well when competing directly with other dogs, as in lure coursing.

Who Can Run in a Fast CAT?

Fast CATs are open to all dogs at least 12 months of age that are individually registered with the AKC. This includes dogs with an AKC Limited or Conditional Registration. There are other qualifying registrations that allow participation, but they are not common to Ridgebacks. Breed disqualifications that exclude dogs from participating in other events don't apply. For instance, ridgeless Ridgebacks that cannot enter lure coursing events CAN compete in Fast CATs. Even monorchid/cryptorchid dogs are also eligible to participate. Females in season may not enter.

How Does Fast CAT Work?

Before the event begins an Inspection Committee inspects each entered dog for lameness, fitness to compete, and to make sure none of the females are in season. The Inspection committee may also measure dogs to determine their height at the withers to determine handicaps which will be discussed a little later.

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Because Fast CAT is a timed event, there is no judge. It is the “Huntmaster” that controls the course and oversees the event. The Huntmaster is in charge of all dogs and handlers on the field. He or she ensures handlers understand safe release and retrieval procedures, that the lure is properly positioned, and that the lure operator, timers and starting line signal person are ready. When everything and everyone is in place, the Huntmaster signals the lure operator to start the lure while giving the verbal signal “tallyho” to release the dog.

The 100-yard course the dog runs is flat and straight and free of any potential hazards. The course is usually completely fenced, but that decision is up to the club sponsoring the event. A white plastic bag or a soft toy that squeaks may be used for the lure that is pulled down the length of the run, in front of the dog. There is a start line and a finish line. The dog may be released up to 10 feet prior to the start line to get a running start. It is the handler’s responsibility to be at the start line, ready to release the dog when notified by the Huntmaster.



The club putting on the Fast CAT must provide a minimum of 30 yards after the finish line for a safe run-out area. Generally, the end of the course is completely fenced to help in collecting the dog after they run. Someone will need to be at the finish to collect the dog after they run. It is recommended that an owner or someone familiar with the dog catch the dog once the dog has crossed the finish line. Handlers must remain either at the start or the finish area of the course. Handlers are not allowed to run with a dog nor are they allowed to entice a dog down the course with anything other than the Fast CAT lure.

How is a Dog Scored?

Clubs may use stop watches or electronic timing equipment. The time to complete the 100-yard dash is recorded to the nearest 1/100th of a second. In a Fast CAT, the dog runs alone and their time is converted to miles per hour (MPH). Dogs earn points based on their speed and titles are awarded when a dog has accumulated a given number of points. A handicap system is applied to a dog’s MPH to determine the number of points earned. The handicap system is based on the height of the dog at its withers:

- 18” or greater = handicap is 1.0
- 12” up to less than 18” = handicap is 1.5
- Below 12” = handicap is 2.0

Given the size of our Rhodesian Ridgebacks, most, if not all will have a handicap of 1.0.

Do I Need Any Special Equipment?

Dogs may wear any type of collar except a choke collar, a prong collar, head halter or an electronic training collar. The collar should be snug to reduce the chances of catching on something during the run. Some clubs may require that tags on collars either be removed or be taped up so they aren’t hanging down. Handlers may choose to run their dogs with no collar but, keep in mind, you must be able to catch your dog easily at the finish of a run.



Handlers may use any type of leash to take the dog to the start line, however, the leash must be easily removed once the dog is at the start line. The handler at the finish will also need a leash to put on the dog when they catch them at the end.

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How Do I Enter a Fast CAT?

You can find out about scheduled Fast CATs by checking the [AKC Events Calendar](#) or, they are listed on some of the show fancier sites such as Infodog. All participants must fill out an entry form as provided in the club's premium list. A club will accept entries prior to the event. Some clubs may accept day-of-entries as well. A club may also limit the number of entries it will accept. Additional "stand-by" entries above the limit may be taken at the discretion of the event committee and these dogs will be allowed to run if time permits.

How Do I Get a Title on My Dog?

Titles are earned by accumulating points. Your dog doesn't have to out run other dogs to earn a title! The titles and the point counts required to achieve the title are listed below.

- BCAT = 150 points
- DCAT = 500 points
- FCAT = 1,000 points
- FCAT followed by a number, such as FCAT2, is for every additional 500 points attained

These suffix titles appear on a dog's pedigree, with a higher-level title superseding a lower level title.

The host club will send all results in to the AKC and the AKC will record all points for each dog. Handlers are still encouraged to keep track of the points for their own dog.

How are the Points Calculated?

To calculate the number of points a dog earns during a trial, the time for the dog's run must first be converted to miles per hour using the formula:

$$204.545/\text{dog's time} = \text{MPH}$$

Then, the miles per hour is multiplied by the handicap based on the dog's height at the withers. This is pretty easy for most of our Ridgebacks since the handicap is 1 for the vast majority. But, let's give an example for a smaller dog.

Example:

The dog's height at the withers is 15". Based on that, their handicap is 1.5.

The dog ran the 100-yard dash in 8.14 seconds. The points calculation would be:

$$(204.545/8.14) \times 1.5 = 37.69 \text{ points (rounded to the nearest } 1/100^{\text{th}})$$

Once the scores are calculated, the scores are posted near the Superintendent's table. Fast CAT event results are posted on the AKC website and displayed in the Fast CAT – Top 20 Rankings.



BARRC's First All-Breed Fast CAT

Now that you know all about Fast CATs, why not give it a try? The event will be held on July 18th, 2020 at the Solano Community College, 4000 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield, CA 94534-3197. Download the premium and entry form at the [BARRC website](#) and get your entry in by July 15th!



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The Puppy Corner

Many BARRC members are long-time breeders of Rhodesian Ridgebacks and there isn't much *The Puppy Corner* of this newsletter could cover that they don't already know. The first person you should be turning to when you have an issue or concern about your puppy, is the breeder of your pup. These breeders are your best source of information and, if they can't answer your questions, they can guide you to the right resources. In addition, breeders appreciate getting feedback on any health, behavior, or emotional issues that arise in one of the pups they have whelped. Responsible, preservation breeders are always there for their puppy owners whether the pup is 8 weeks old or 8 years old.

Here are a couple of things that new puppy owners might find interesting:

Dog's Age in Human Years

A common rule of thumb for dog owners has been that one year for dogs is equivalent to seven human years. New research is challenging this assumption. Young puppies age much faster than young humans do, so that simple one-to-seven year ratio is wrong. A 1-year-old dog is more "like a 30-year-old human," one scientist said. As dogs get older, they age more slowly. The researchers found that a 6-year-old dog is more like a 60-year-old human and a 12-year-old Labrador would be the equivalent of 70 in human years. There is some interesting research behind this that can be found [here](#).

How Much Exercise is Too Much?

Very often people are attracted to Rhodesian Ridgebacks because they are athletic. Owners are excited about a dog that can hike the trails with them and be good running partners. Owners need to be patient, however, and not do too much, too soon with their puppies or it can result in significant, irreversible health issues. Until the pup's growth plates close, at roughly 18 months, they're soft and vulnerable to injury. In addition to having soft growth plates, puppies' bones are also soft and subject to torsion with too much stress and their cardio-vascular systems aren't mature enough for intense activity. Exercise should be limited to puppy activities that are age-appropriate.

Puppy Culture provides a lot of good general information on puppies, puppy training and on puppy age-appropriate activities. You can find the age-appropriate information on the [Puppy Culture website](#).

COMING IN THE NEXT EDITION

MORE ON
PERFORMANCE EVENTS
FOR RIDGEBACKS

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES
FOR MAKING YOU AND YOUR
RIDGEBACK A SUPERSTAR
TEAM ALONG WITH HOW AND
WHERE TO COMPETE

Look for a performance event interest survey on the BARRC Facebook page coming soon. We'd like to know what events pique your interest. Or, send me an email on what you would like to learn more about. wendypeirce@gmail.com

