



GUIDE TO TRIALLING

What I wish I knew before my first trial...by Kim Lusby

Before The Trial: things to keep in mind

- **Let organisers know if your dog is reactive** - many dogs are, and most organisers will absolutely understand. Advocate for your dog's comfort and safety.
- **There can be long waits between searches** - plan ahead for your dog's comfort (in the car, crate, or by your side) during downtime.

What To Bring (and not forget)

- **For you:** food, drinks, layers for unpredictable weather (and spare clothes in case of soakings!), sunscreen, appropriate closed-toe shoes, a chair, and extra patience.
- **For your dog:** plenty of water + bowl, food, treats or toys for rewarding (be mindful of rules around dropped food), poo bags, sunshade and magnets for the car, cooling mat if needed.
- **For the trial:** correct harness +lead as per trail regulations, number armband if required (e.g. Dogs NZ), screenshot of the running order, a pen to jot notes.

Planning Your Day

- **Arrive well before the briefing** - these sometimes start early and being late adds stress. Toilet your dog at the beginning of the day, as well as directly before your search.
- **Check the location map carefully** - some zones may be off-limits for toileting or movement. Respect posted signage.
- **Keep the running order handy** - highlight handlers you know ahead of you on the running order, so you can prepare in time.
- Trials can be all-day events, often in remote or rural areas with no shops or cell coverage.
- A trial may be an all-day event (including prizegiving), so plan ahead for lots of food and hydration for you both! Don't assume plans will run to schedule.

On The Day: Trial Tips & Etiquette

During Searches:

- **Breathe. Pause. Start calmly.** Your time only starts from when you cross the start line, so there's no rush to leap in.
- **Assess the environment** - consider wind, search boundaries, time limits. Plan your search area, remember not to skip corners and to turn and work the opposite direction.
- **Photographers might be present** - if their presence is distracting or stressful for your dog, politely ask them to keep their distance.
- **No post-search chat!** You can use a thumbs up/down if you want to tell others how you went, but discussing searches can lead to disqualification.
- **Advocate for ALL dogs** - if your dog is reactive, make it visible (vests, lead sleeves, etc.) and speak up - kindly ask people who are unaware to respect your dog's space. If your dog is not reactive, still give plenty of space to others.
- **Talk to people around you** - people are often kind and helpful to newbies.

Between Searches

- Give your dog a toilet break well ahead of each search - not just before!
- Keep them calm and comfortable during downtime - bring calming chews or a familiar bed if helpful.
- **Bonus tip:** Stick any used-poo-bags under your windshield wiper if there are no bins - it's gross but effective for remembering to take it home.

After The Trial: Things You Might Not Know

- **Save all certificates and score sheets** - you'll need them to claim titles when progressing to higher levels.
- You may like to post a picture of your pup on social media with a thank you to organisers. A lot of hard work goes into a trial - mostly by volunteers.

♥ Personal Tips From Experience

- Wear your club shirt - be proud of where you and your dog have trained!
- Make friends with handlers near you in the running order - it helps reduce stress and keeps you in the loop.
- You're not alone - most people there have been in your shoes and understand it can feel overwhelming at first.
- Don't panic. Don't forget to breathe. And most importantly: **keep calm and sniff on!**