



GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG CLUB OF AMERICA-
WORKING DOG ASSOCIATION, INC.

HELPER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

(Revised August 2, 2012)

The Helper Certification Program is instituted by the German Shepherd Dog Club of America-Working Dog Association (GSDCA-WDA), with the goal of providing education for Helpers and certification of Helpers at multiple levels of competence.

A. The Helper Program Committee

The Helper Program Committee shall consist of at least one Trial Judge, the National Training Director, at least one Teaching Helper, and at least one previous World Team Competitor. The Helper Program Committee shall oversee the education and certification program for the GSDCA-WDA. Final authority for all certifications, however, rests with the Board of Directors as per Article VI.1 of the GSDCA-WDA Bylaws.

B. Types of Helpers

Three different categories of Helpers are recognized; they are:

1) **Club Trial Helper**

A Club Trial Helper has the responsibility of working in all three levels of protection work during a local club trial. The Helper must be capable of working both club dogs as well as those from outside the club in a fair, correct, and safe fashion.

2) **Regional Trial Helper**

A regional Trial Helper has the responsibility of working at all three levels of protection work during a Club or Regional competition. The Helper must be capable of working powerful, quick dogs that they have not worked before; in a fair, demanding, correct and safe fashion.

3) **National Trial Helper**

A National Trial Helper has the responsibility of working in all three levels of protection work during a Club, Regional or National competition. The Helper must be capable of working powerful, quick dogs that they have not worked before; in a fair, demanding, correct and safe fashion.

4) **Teaching Helper**

A Teaching Helper has the responsibility of teaching and certifying Helpers at the Club, Regional and National level. A Teaching Helper should have extensive knowledge about dog behavior and training principles, and demonstrate the ability to conduct seminars and to disseminate that knowledge to diverse groups of Helpers.

C. Prerequisites for Certification

- 1) The applicant must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- 2) The applicant must be a GSDCA-WDA member or a member applicant. If membership is pending at the time of the seminar, the Helper applicant may still participate and receive a rating according to his/her skill level (without a Trial Helper Book). The Helper applicant will receive his/her Trial Helper Book only after all membership requirements have been fulfilled.
- 3) The applicant should have a thorough understanding of the protection trial rules for all three Working Dog levels.
- 4) The applicant should show good physical conditioning and coordination sufficient to perform the Helper's duties in an assertive, fair, consistent and safe manner during an event.
- 5) Applicants for Helper Certification must pass a written test developed by the Helper Program about Helper work on all three Working Dog levels. Upon passing the written test, the applicant will receive an official GSDCA-WDA Trial Helper Book.

D. The Certification Process

1) Club Trial Helper

GSDCA-WDA Club Trial Helpers may be certified through a one or two-day certification event, depending on the number of Helpers to be certified, and may be presented by one (1) Teaching Helper. Entry fees shall be limited to no more than \$100 per entrant per day.

The certifier shall receive compensation for travel expenses, meals and lodging and a daily stipend of \$50. The club hosting the certification event is responsible for all expenses.

2) Regional Trial Helpers

To become certified an applicant must attend an official GSDCA-WDA certification event. All requirements must be successfully completed within a single event in order for certification to be granted. Regional Certification events may be hosted by local GSDCA-WDA affiliated clubs or by the GSDCA-WDA. The Regional Certification may be a one (1) or two (2) day event depending on the number of Helpers to be certified and may be presented by one (1) Teaching Helper. Entry fees shall be limited to no more than \$100 per entrant per day. The certifier shall receive compensation for travel expenses, meals and lodging and a daily stipend of \$50. The club hosting the certification event is responsible for all expenses

3) National Trial Helpers

To become certified an applicant must attend an official GSDCA-WDA certification event. National Trial Certification events may be hosted by local GSDCA-WDA affiliated clubs or by the GSDCA-WDA. National Trial certification events may be a one (1) or two (2) day event depending on the number of Helpers to be certified and must be presented by two (2) Teaching Helpers. The National level applicant may attend two separate certifications conducted by two (2) different Teaching Helpers to obtain the seminar requirements. National Trial certification events must be videotaped. Entry fees shall be limited to no more than \$100 per entrant per day. The certifier(s) shall receive compensation for travel expenses, meals and lodging and a daily stipend of \$50. The club hosting the certification event is responsible for all expenses.

Helpers who already have National Level status from another organization may obtain a National Level rating with the WDA by: 1) attending a WDA Helper Certification Seminar; 2) fulfilling the standard of National Level competence in the seminar; 3) having previously worked a Regional or National IPO Trial; 4) presenting a documented evaluation of "Very Good" or "Excellent" from a licensed SV Judge.

4) Teaching Helpers

The Helper Program Committee may recommend new Teaching Helpers for approval by the GSDCA-WDA Board of Directors. Teaching Helper applicants must be approved by the Board of Directors in advance.

- a. The candidate for Teaching Helper must:
 1. Be a member in good standing of GSDCA
 2. Be a member in good standing of GSDCA-WDA for a minimum of eighteen (18) months
 3. Be a member in good standing of a GSDCA-WDA member club
 4. Have at least eight (8) years experience as a helper
 5. Have served as a club Training Director or assistant to the Training Director or in an equivalent position for a service dog agency
 6. Have trained/titled at least two (2) dogs to a working title or as a certified service dog
 7. Have "Köred" a dog or performed as a helper for a Körung
 8. Have performed as a trial Helper for at least four (4) club trials
 9. Attend a two (2) day Helper Certification
- b. Prospective candidates must attend a Helper Certification Event wherein, through the interaction with people and dogs, the presiding Teaching Helper can determine if they possess the physical and communication skills to be a Teaching Helper. The seminar can be a two (2) day event or two one (1) day events but the candidate must complete the process and be evaluated by two (2) different Teaching Helpers.
- c. Following the completion of the WDA Helper Seminar/Certification the reports from the two (2) Teaching Helpers shall be forwarded to the Helper Committee. The Helper Committee will issue a recommendation about the candidate. If approved by the Helper Committee, the Chair of the Committee will present the candidate to the GSDCA-WDA Board of Directors for final approval.

- d. A prerequisite may be waived with the unanimous approval of the Helper Committee and $\frac{3}{4}$ approval of the Board of Directors.

E. **Certification Events**

Certification events may be scheduled for one (1) or two (2) days. A point system will be used to determine how many days the event will run. A GSDCA-WDA certification will only allow a Teaching Helper to teach and evaluate a total of twelve (12) points in one day. The number of Helper applicants that total more than twelve in the assigned point system will require that the seminar/certification will be a total of two (2) days. If two (2) Teaching Helpers are conducting the seminar then the twelve (12) point cap is removed. If a seminar/certification is scheduled for one (1) day and more applicants show up and exceed the point total for a one day event, the event will automatically become a two (2) day event: A. Club level helper three (3) points; B. Regional level helper two (2) points; C. National level helper one (1) point.

Certification events shall include a presentation of the fundamentals of protection work with emphasis on trial procedure and practical implementation followed by the evaluation of the applicant Helpers.

The Club Trial Helper must work several dogs, no more than four (4), at different trial levels. At least one (1) dog must be working at the highest level. A Regional or National Trial Helper aspirant who is attending a certification event for the first time shall work several dogs, but no more than eight (8) at different trial levels; at least four (4) dogs shall be working at the highest level.

The applicant Helper should show good physical conditioning and coordination sufficient to carry out a Helper's task in an assertive, fair, equitable, consistent and safe fashion for all dogs in a trial. The "Stand still" phase must be performed in such a way that the handler can see the dog on the sleeve. The Club Trial Helper's physical condition has to be good enough to work five (5) dogs in a row and the National Trial Helper thirty (30) dogs in a day according to regulations in the rulebook. The protection phase in a Working Dog trial is a contest between Helper and dog. The National Trial Helper has to be able to put real psychological and physical pressure on the dogs.

If at all possible all Helpers should be videotaped. After the test their work will be discussed while watching the videotape.

A Helper who is attending for re-evaluation must pass an endurance test (by running several laps about the field in full Helper gear) and work up to three (3) dogs, which should be at the highest working level. When questioned about rule changes, the Helper must be able to recite all applicable changes to the evaluator.

Note: The applicants will be required to provide his/her own protection equipment. If the applicant fails to have the requisite equipment, the examiner may excuse the applicant.

F. **Maintaining Certification**

- 1) GSDCA-WDA Club Trial Helper certification is valid for two (2) years. The Helper should do helper work at a GSDCA-WDA, DVG, USCA or GSSCC sanctioned trial at least once every two (2) years and if the officiating licensed judge at the trial approves of the work and marks this in the GSDCA-WDA Trial Helper Book, the Helper's certification will be extended for another two (2) years. The officiating licensed judge at a trial, if possible and if time allows, may also re-evaluate other Helpers and if the officiating licensed judge approves, their certifications will be extended for another two (2) years. Such certification must immediately follow the sanctioned trial and must be publicly announced during the trial.
- 2) GSDCA-WDA Regional Trial Helper certification is valid for a period of two (2) years. The Helper must re-certify on or before his/her anniversary date either by attending a certification event or by working a GSDCA-WDA Club or Regional trial. If the officiating judge at the trial approves of the work, his certification will be renewed for two (2) years from that date.
- 3) GSDCA-WDA National Trial Helper certification is valid for a period of four (4) years. The Helper must re-certify on or before his/her anniversary date either by attending a certification event or by working a GSDCA-WDA National trial. If the officiating judge at the trial approves of the work, his certification will be renewed for four years from that date.
- 4) Teaching Helper certification is valid for a period of four (4) years. Recommendation for reappointment may be made by the Helper Committee and shall require GSDCA-WDA Board approval.

- 5) Certified Helpers are responsible for reviewing all information published about rule changes as they occur. Certification may be revoked if the Helper is not aware of current rules. All Helpers are encouraged to attend various seminars, whenever possible, for their own continuing educational improvement. It is the responsibility of the Certified Helper to provide the GSDCA-WDA Office with proof of re-evaluation. Upon receipt of a copy of the Trial Helper Book page completed and signed by the officiating judge, certification will be extended two (2) years.
- 6) Certification status will automatically expire if the Helper's membership in the GSDCA-WDA is cancelled for any reason. Any Helper whose membership expires must go through the certification program again after reactivating their membership.
- 7) Teaching Helper certification will automatically expire if the Helper's membership in the GSDCA-WDA and/or the GSDCA is cancelled for any reason. Any Teaching Helper whose membership expires must go through the certification process again after reactivating their membership.

G. Event Requirements

Helpers at National trials must be certified National Trial Helpers. Helpers at these trials will receive expenses travel, meals and lodging and a daily fee of \$50. The agreed upon Helper expenses are the responsibility of the host club.

- Helpers at Breed Surveys must be certified Club, Regional or National Trial Helpers.
- Helpers at Regional trials must be certified Regional or National Trial Helpers.
- Helpers at local club trials must be certified Club Trial Helpers.

H. Helper Equipment

Complete Helper equipment consists of protection pants, protection jacket, groin protector, protection sleeve, trial helper stick and proper shoes. The Trial Helper stick must be padded and the outer cover should be leather.

Helpers are required to have jackets available at a club trial. The judge will decide whether or not they must be worn.

At Breed Surveys, Regional and National trials, wearing of the jacket shall comply with the rules in force at that time.

I. Record Keeping and Privileges

All *original* Helper Certification documents (tests, evaluations, videotapes, etc.) will be sent to the GSDCA-WDA Office by the Helper Event Certifier within five (5) business days of the Helper Certification event by traceable mail or delivery service.

The GSDCA-WDA Office shall maintain a list of certified Helpers and expiration dates. A listing of all certified Helpers shall be posted on the GSDCA-WDA website. All certified Helpers must maintain a Trial Helper Book in which the trial performance will be documented and assessed by the presiding judge. The Trial Helper Book is available at the GSDCA-WDA Office.

The position of GSDCA-WDA Certified Helper is an honorific designation. Certified Helpers may "advertise" their GSDCA-WDA certification only in association with official GSDCA-WDA events.

National Trial Helpers and Teaching Helpers will be given free entrance and catalog to all GSDCA-WDA events. This is in effect only if the Helper is a spectator or working as a Helper, not if he/she is an entrant in the event.

J. Disciplinary Action

Any Certified Helper who fails to perform at any trial in an equitable, safe and sportsmanlike manner shall be excused from a trial by the judge who may recommend censure or other disciplinary action to the Helper Program Committee. Improper behavior on the part of any GSDCA-WDA Certified Teaching Helper shall be reported to the Helper Program Committee for disciplinary action. If all original Helper Certification documents are not sent within five (5) business days, the Helper Event Certifier may be subject to disciplinary action as recommended by the Helper Program Committee. The recommendations of the Helper Program Committee shall be forwarded to the GSDCA-WDA Board of Directors for action.