

Tracking Definitions

Terminology Glossary of Tracking Terms

This glossary was compiled using definitions found in the references in tracking books.

AIR SCENT : The airborne scent left by a person, animal or object. (Is also used as a verb when the dog attempts to follow a track by locating the airborne scent left by the tracklayer.) (Barwig & Hilliard)

ARTICLE : An item left on the track by the tracklayer for the dog to find. (Barwig & Hilliard)

BACKTRACK : Retracing steps over a portion of the track that has already been completed. (Ganz & Boyd)

BLIND TRACK : Laid by another person and totally unknown to the handler. (Ganz & Boyd)

BODY SCENT : The unique aroma surrounding each individual. The scent a dog follows is a combination of “track scent” and “body scent.” (Barwig & Hilliard)

CAST : Stray or wander off a track for more than 3’ on either side. (Something the dog does.) (Ganz & Boyd)

CERTIFICATION : A written statement by an AKC tracking judge that a dog has satisfactorily completed a track equivalent to a TD tracking test. Such a document is required when entering an actual TD test. (AKC Tracking Regulations)

COURSING : Sweeping back and forth across the track in wide arcs. (Also called “quartering.”) (Ganz & Boyd)

COVER : The type of vegetation covering the ground. Examples: short grass, hay, woods.

COVER CHANGES : Changes in vegetation that occur on a single track. (Ganz & Boyd)

CROSS-TRACKS : Diversionary tracks which intersect the primary track. In tracking tests, cross-tracks are laid deliberately to test the dog’s ability to discriminate between the “right” scent and other scents. In training (and in tests) animals and people sometimes provide unplanned cross-tracks.

DEEP NOSE : The dog’s characteristic in tracking whereby it takes full scent and tracks with its nose close to the ground. This is a desirable quality. (Barwig & Hilliard)

DROP : An article placed on the track to be located by the dog. Can also be a food drop (used in training). (Ganz & Boyd) **FH (Fahrtenhund)** : The most advanced tracking title awarded in the sport of Schutzhund. (Barwig & Hilliard)

FOULED TRACK : Compromised (or “polluted”) by an unplanned scent. (Ganz & Boyd)

FRINGE : The immediate area on either side of the primary track. (Ganz & Boyd) **HIGH**

NOSE : The dog’s characteristic in tracking whereby it tracks with its nose too high above the ground. A dog with high nose is using air scent as well as the track scent and will lose points during the tracking portion of the Schutzhund evaluation. (Barwig & Hilliard)

INDICATION : The change in the behavior of the dog that signals the handler to a loss of scent, a turn, an article, etc..

LEG : Segment of a track between the start and first turn or between subsequent turns. (Ganz & Boyd)

NON-RESTRICTIVE HARNESS : A harness that does not restrict the dog’s shoulder movement. (Ganz & Boyd)

OBSTACLE : Obstruction or hindrance that interrupts dog’s scenting. May be natural or man-made and dog and/or handler may have to go around, over or through it. (Ganz & Boyd)

PLOT : to lay out a track and/or make a map. (Ganz & Boyd)

PRIMARY TRACK : The track the dog is to follow. (Ganz & Boyd)

QUARTERING : See Coursing.

SCUFFING : Dragging of tracklayer’s feet to leave a very concentrated scent. (Ganz & Boyd)

STEPTRACKING : Scenting from one footprint to another. Beneficial in finding articles, sorting out primary track from cross-tracks, and working older and/or longer tracks. (Ganz & Boyd)

TRACKING DOG : The title awarded by the AKC to dogs which have successfully completed a TD track at a licensed tracking test. (AKC Tracking Regulations)

TRACKING DOG EXCELLENT : The title awarded by the AKC to dogs which have successfully completed a TDX track at a licensed tracking test. (AKC Tracking Regulations)

TRACK SCENT : The scent of the ground surface that has been disturbed by the tracklayer. The scent a dog follows is a combination of “track scent” and “body scent.” (Barwig & Hilliard)

VARIABLE SURFACE TRACKING : A type of tracking, recently added to the AKC’s tracking events, in which the dog follows human scent across a variety of surfaces on a single track. The title VST is awarded by the AKC to dogs which successfully complete a VST track at a licensed tracking test. (AKC Tracking Regulations)

WHISTLE : What the judge uses to indicate that a dog and handler have lost the track and failed a test. Glen Johnson describes the “chilling pain” of getting a whistle, but it’s doubtful you’ll need therapy.

This site copyrighted by Gary Roe. All rights reserved ©2021 My Tracking Dog