

By Gary Vollrath, OH

From time to time, it is a good idea to review the rules for the various certificates issued by the AWTA. There is a great deal of interest among terrier and Dachshund owners in working their dogs in the field and earning Working Certificates. AWTA has some very active new members as well as seasoned members who participate in the Working Certificate program. Following is an excerpt from the AWTA Book of Rules and Regulations regarding the Working Certificate (WC).

Working Certificate (WC):

The WC is awarded only to dogs whose owners are AWTA Members in good standing at the time of qualifying work. A terrier or Dachshund can earn a WC to each of the following quarry worked in a natural earth: woodchuck, fox, raccoon, badger, aggressive possum, and other quarry found acceptable by the Trustees on review of an application submitted by a member for earthwork done to that quarry. This does not include work in a drain or otherwise man-made earth. The dog must enter the earth without assistance. If the dog is actively marking a restricted or impeded entrance to an earth, removing a restriction, such as a stone or root, is allowed. However, no further assistance, alteration or enlargement of the entrance to the den is permitted. The dog must enter far enough to be completely out of sight when a person is looking down the hole.

The dog must locate the quarry in the earth completely on its own without encouragement (dog or human). Simple verbal communication from the handler to the dog is allowed. Loud, frenzied, or excited verbal encouragement intended to work-up the dog is not allowed. The dog must work alone (only one dog in the earth), must work down to the quarry and cause it to bolt, or draw it from the earth. If the quarry does not bolt or is not drawn, the terrier or Dachshund must work in a manner sufficient to allow diggers to locate and dig to the quarry. There is to be no doubt that the dog is right up to the quarry while marking. A visual positive identification of the quarry is required.

The terrier or Dachshund must work by the above rules and another AWTA member must witness the dog's work. A WC application, which includes a written, detailed report of the hunt, bearing the signatures of both the owner(s) who were present and at least one witness, along with the filing fee (\$5.00) must be sent to the Hunting and Working Certificate Secretary. The WC application must be submitted within one year of the hunt. The HC/WC Secretary will send a copy of the report to each of the Trustees for their review and approval. A unanimous approval is required to award the Working Certificate. Reason(s) for disapproval will be sent to the person requesting an evaluation. When more than one person owns a dog, the only name(s) that will appear on the working certificate are those of the owner(s) who were present when the certificate was earned.

The process works as follows:

The WC application is available in Down to Earth, as well as online at <http://www.awta.org>. The owner(s) of the dog completes a WC application. The owner(s) and the witness sign the application. The completed application, signed by the owner(s) and the witness, along with a check for \$5 (\$10 if a flask is desired) is mailed to the WC/HC Secretary. The owner(s) email an electronic copy of the completed application (signatures may be omitted on the electronic copy) to the WC/HC Secretary. This electronic copy is emailed to each of the Trustees. The Trustees review each application to ensure the working requirements have been met. The application is either approved or not by the Trustees. A unanimous approval is required by the Trustees. If further explanation or clarification is required, the WC/HC Secretary will contact the applicant for clarification and submission to the Trustees.

After the application is approved, the WC/HC Secretary will issue a certificate for the first WC earned. Subsequent certificates for that dog will be in the form of a sticker that the owner can affix to the original certificate. The original certificate has spaces for nine stickers, for a total of ten WC.

It is important for members to be familiar with the WC requirements. When writing up the description of work on the WC application, care should be taken to describe the work in such a fashion that the Trustees can be certain all of the requirements have been met. Not all terrier work will meet the requirements for a WC. It may be good work by the terrier but does not meet one or more requirements, such as other dogs or humans providing encouragement so that the dog does not locate completely on its own; the dog not being completely out of sight; the quarry not formidable. Make sure your story of the hunt answers all the requirements so the Trustees can evaluate the application correctly.

The descriptions of the work from approved applications are a source of stories that are published in the Down to Earth (DTE) newsletter. The DTE is read by not only AWTA members, but by other people as well. For this reason, applicants are encouraged to use good taste in their descriptions. The descriptions of work are useful as an educational tool and as a source of encouragement to people who are learning to work their terriers and Dachshunds. Many of our members enjoy reading the descriptions of work. For these reasons, applicants are encouraged to make the descriptions interesting. You don't have to tell what clothes everybody wore on the hunt, but pertinent information, like special weather conditions, special terrain conditions, description of tools used, difficult conditions (i.e. hard soil, rocks, tree roots, brush that needed to be cleared, etc.), how deep the dog was when located or dug to, how far the dog was from the entrance hole), all help the Trustees in evaluating the work, and make the DTE reading educational and interesting.

It helps to add a title to your write-up. The title helps to identify the work and the write-up. When the write-ups are published in DTE, the editor adds a title, if there is not already one. So, if you add your own title your message may be clearer.

Photos add a lot to DTE. Consider submitting a photo to DTE about the work. If you submit a photo to the DTE editor, include in the photo file name, or in the email subject line, the title of the write-up. This will help the editor identify what photos go with what write-ups. A photo of the diggers and the dog by the dig hole are always good. A photo of the dog in the ground is also good. Be creative. Remember, photos should be in good taste a lot of people read DTE.

I hope this has been a good introduction to our members who are less experienced in the WC application, as well as a good refresher for our seasoned members. If you ever have questions, ask an Officer or Trustee, or an experienced member, or visit the AWTA website at <http://www.awta.org> . Keep those terriers and Dachshunds working and keep sending in those WC applications.