

Capital Comets—Trialling in the Time of COVID-19

Capital Comets is grateful to Team Okanagan for providing some of the content of this document.

Our understanding of COVID-19 is evolving quickly, and COVID-19 information and directives change as our public health officials respond to new knowledge. These protocols are current at the time of writing but may be subject to change as the year progresses. The principles guiding these protocols, however, remain the same.

Safety is always the first priority.

Successful agility trialling in a COVID-19 environment is the responsibility of everyone at a trial. The trial host is not solely responsible for ensuring the health and safety of people attending the trial.

The BC Ministry of Health's guidelines—[*COVID-19: Going Forward*](#)—identify physical distancing as the primary control measure along with hygiene/hand washing, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

The guidelines of BC's Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, recommend outdoor activities over indoor activities, and her current public health order restricts public gatherings to a maximum of 50 people. For these reasons the Capital Comets protocols focus on an outdoor trial. They will be reviewed and modified as needed prior to the club offering an indoor trial.

A Note about PPE

Non-medical face masks have been determined to play a role in slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in as much as they slow the droplet spread from an individual carrying the virus. This mechanism does not provide any protection for the wearer, and in situations such as a trial setting they will be effective only if everyone is wearing a mask so that we protect one another. Masks are not a substitute for physical distancing.

Single-use disposable gloves are of limited use, and in non-medical settings their use is not recommended at the moment, since the virus can be transmitted as easily on the gloves as on the hand. Theoretically gloves provide some protection to the wearer; this assumes scrupulously correct use and disposal of gloves. Unless this is the case, glove use may pose an increased risk to other people since it tends to reduce the use of hand washing. Perspex barriers are in use in various public areas in the general community to provide protection for individuals who are in prolonged indoor contact with a large number of people throughout the day, for example, office receptionists, cashiers, etc. Such a barrier at an outdoor trial should be unnecessary provided that all guidelines are followed.

We are in this together. Be Safe, Be Calm, Be Kind—it is everyone's responsibility.

These messages have been the hallmark of the BC government's response to the pandemic, and they will be essential for a successful trial that is above all safe—and is also enjoyable for all.

Safe trials depend on everyone following the guidelines—no exceptions.

You must not attend the trial if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or feeling unwell. You will be asked to leave the trial site immediately if you are visibly unwell.

COVID-19 symptoms mimic those of other respiratory ailments, especially in the early stages. The Provincial Health Officer has been very clear that individuals must err on the side of caution, and that anyone with respiratory symptoms must be assumed to potentially be infected with COVID-19 unless proven otherwise. This means that even if you are sure you have a common cold or seasonal allergies, if you are coughing persistently or have upper respiratory symptoms, you may not attend the trial.

Entry fees will be refunded for any individuals who cancel their entry due to illness.

However, anyone who attends the trial and who is visibly unwell or showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection will be asked to leave the trial site immediately and will not receive a refund.

Everyone attending the trial must comply with all COVID-19 precautions, guidelines, rules, and regulations developed by Capital Comets and in place at the trial. These are intended to ensure the safety of all participants. It may be a challenge to break old habits, and we should all make every effort to be calm and be kind, but we must also be safe. Anyone who is

consistently failing to comply may be dismissed from the trial and will not receive a refund of fees.

Trial Entry

Only registered competitors, registered volunteers, and judge(s) may be on the trial site. No friends or family may attend.

Trial entry will be as follows:

- Entry will be limited to 40 Capital Comets members to allow for a comfortable buffer under the current 50-person limit, and to allow for the judge(s) and potentially a few non-competing volunteers.
- Entry will be online, and electronic payment is preferred.
- At the trial chair's discretion, competitors may add additional runs at the trial and pay for them by cheque, with cash (in a plastic bag), or by e-transfer/PayPal the following day.

The following information will be referenced on the premium, which will include a statement that applying to enter the trial implies the entrant's acceptance of the guidelines. Two to three days before the trial, entrants will receive from Comets an email confirmation and are required to reply to it, thus indicating that they agree to follow Capital Comets' COVID-19 precautions, guidelines, rules, and regulations, are free of COVID-19 symptoms, and have not been in contact with any person known to be infected with COVID-19 or who has travelled outside the province in the preceding 14 days. (See appendix A.)

Because incidental contact cannot be completely prevented, ***all two-footed participants must wear a mask unless they are in***

their own socially distant crating area or in the ring running their dog. You may remove your mask when you set up to start your run, place it in a resealable plastic bag, put it in your pocket or leave it at the finish line with your leash. Put your mask on again before you leave the ring. You may remove your mask when you enter your crating area and must replace your mask when you leave that area. You may eat or drink only in your crating area.

Please bring your own masks and sufficient hand sanitizer for your personal use during the trial. Sanitizer will be provided for volunteers' use before and after volunteer assignments.

There will be no concession stand. Bottled water and canned soda may be available.

Dog cooling stations (pools) will be set up.

Camping is permitted by the Fairground. RVs must be appropriately spaced. The RV sites will be considered to be part of the venue, so only registered entrants, registered volunteers, or judges are eligible to camp.

Guidelines for Running a Capital Comets Trial at the Saanich Fairgrounds

Physical Distancing

The default physical distance is 6 feet at all times unless people are engaged in an activity that makes this impossible (e.g., setting the contact equipment, building the ring).

Vehicles must be parked 6 feet apart.

Shade tents are permitted but must have 6 feet of space between them and may not be shared except by people who live in the same home. The tenting area will be marked off to assist with setup.

The trial will consist of one agility ring set up in the Wallace Ring so that there is ample space for the required physical distancing.

General information usually covered in the “general briefing” will be emailed to entrants as part of the trial confirmation. A very short briefing update will be provided on the day, during which people must stay 6 feet apart as they gather to listen.

Course maps will be available via email on each day of the trial. In addition, maps will be posted at two stations. Only one person is allowed to be at a map station at a given time.

Walk throughs will be adjusted depending on the number of entries per class to limit the number of people walking at one time. Be courteous to fellow competitors.

Competitors will receive a running order for the trial as an attachment to the confirmation email. Remember that the running order may change as the trial progresses. Entrants are responsible for listening for their name being called out and for being at the gate on time.

There will be no leash runner. Competitors have the option of placing their leash at the exit while their dog waits on the start line or, if that is not practicable for their dog, running the course with their leash securely tucked into a pocket, as AAC permits until the

end of 2020. Please read the “AAC Position Statement May 25th 2020” instructions below carefully:”

“Competitors may place the dog’s leash in their pockets when running the course. The leash must be small enough to fit completely inside the pocket. Note: if the dog grabs the leash while running or jumps at the handler’s pocket, this will be scored as an “E” (toy in the ring). If the leash falls out of the pocket during the run and the dog does not interact with it, there will be no fault. This in effect until December 31, 2020.”

When a dog is in the ring, two dogs 6 feet apart may wait in line on the marked spots near the gate (or at a greater distance if your dog requires it).

Volunteers

There will be no sign-up sheets. A call for volunteers will be emailed ahead of the trial. Additional volunteer roles will be necessary to maintain safety at the site. Please ensure that you sign up with the volunteer coordinator. Volunteer wranglers will help during the trial.

Volunteers will wear masks during their assignments.

All volunteers will hand sanitize immediately before and after their assignment. Sanitizer will be available to them in several places around the ring.

Course builders must hand sanitize immediately before and after the course build. Work gloves are not a substitute for hand washing or sanitizing, and the crew should remove their work

gloves and ensure that they store them at their own crating area between course builds.

The gate, timer, and scribe should use their own writing implements.

The gate volunteer will continue to be responsible for calling out names from the list and ensuring that dog-and-handler teams enter the ring in a timely manner. The gate volunteer will be positioned 6 feet away from the gate and will have a copy of the running order. **No gate list will be posted at the gate.**

No one may enter the 6-foot bubble around the gate person. Do not burst the gate volunteer's bubble!

The timer and scribe will be seated 6 feet apart from each other.

Ring crew volunteers will be seated at a greater distance apart (as usual). At the beginning of their assignment, they should determine who will be responsible for each piece of equipment and handle only "their" pieces. Two people who wear masks while adjusting the A frame can be considered to be at low risk since the task takes a minimal amount of time. Ring crew members who choose to wear work gloves must adhere to the guidelines that apply to the course builders.

Ideally one person—a volunteer head timer—will be responsible for managing the timing equipment for the duration of the trial or at least for a given day.

Judges

A judge's table will be set up with a 6-foot buffer from the scorekeeper and from a second judge if one is present. One

designated person will ensure that the judge has food, snacks, etc. Judges should be asked to bring their own masks and office supplies (pens, calculators, etc.) Comets will supply hand sanitizer, and the trial chair should ensure that the judge has sufficient downtime to access the washrooms for hand washing at reasonable intervals (e.g., between events).

Scorekeeper

The scorekeeper's seating will have a 6-foot buffer zone. Competitors may not enter the scorekeeper's bubble. Anyone who wants to ask the scorekeeper about scores or results must stand 6 feet away from the scorekeeper. The scorekeeper is asked to ensure that equipment brought onsite is kept to a minimum. Comets will provide sanitizing spray.

Hand Washing and Sanitizing

Frequent hand washing and sanitizing have been identified as the most important way to prevent the spread of COVID-19, together with physical distancing and refraining from touching your face.

The Fairground washrooms will be open, and Fairground staff will ensure that they are cleaned and well stocked. Comets volunteers will sanitize door handles and taps in the washrooms at frequent intervals throughout the trial.

The timer pad will be sanitized after each event. Pens will be sanitized as necessary (i.e., if the volunteer is not using their own pen).

The scoring binders will be wiped down after each use. Scribes should handle the score sheets as little as is practical.

The scorekeeper should be especially vigilant in handling score sheets as little as possible, and hand washing or sanitizing immediately before and after each episode of entering scores. Completed score sheets can be placed in a resealable plastic bag before filing them for storage.

Dog Measuring

As per the AAC Position Statement May 25th 2020, in order to limit the transfer and handling of documents, for the remainder of 2020 dog ID cards will not be signed by the officiating judge. Judges will provide a one-time measurement for dogs under 2 years or dogs with no measurement recorded on their card. A temporary COVID-19 measurement card will be given to the handler to be used until normal measuring procedures can be resumed. Clubs must not tick "height card viewed" in Agility Rocks until the handler has a signed, permanent ID card.

If a dog has one measurement on their ID card, it can continue to compete in the height indicated by that measurement. In order to limit close contact between handler and judge, the final measurement should be completed at a later date. This measure is in effect until December 31, 2020.

For the measuring that will occur, contact should be minimized as much as possible. While every effort will be made to accommodate dogs that are nervous, if the measurement cannot be completed in a reasonably efficient manner, the attempt may be aborted at the judge's discretion, and the handler will have the option of running FEO or withdrawing from the trial with a full refund.

The measuring wicket will be sanitized between each dog.

Results

The option for electronic notification of results is being explored and will be in place if possible.

As a default practice, the results binders will be located on three separate tables—one each for Starters, Advanced, and Masters. Hand sanitizer will be available on each table. People must hand sanitize before and after handling the binder and should not linger at the table. Only one person should be at a table at any time. The results binders and sheets will be wiped down at intervals throughout the trial.

Ribbons and Titles

Ribbons will not be self-serve. They will be handled by one designated person, who will hand sanitize before doing so. (Note that the ribbons are currently in a sealed plastic box and have not been handled since the March 2020 trial.) A title sheet will be available on a table, at which only one person at a time may be present. People should hand sanitize before and after handling the title sheet. If competitors wish to defer receiving a ribbon, it can be claimed at a later date.

Important Reminders

At all times avoid unnecessary or inadvertent touching of equipment on course or surfaces anywhere on the trial site.

Anticipate that many of the usual routines we have come to expect at trials are changing. Be gracious and kind in adapting to the “new normal” of agility trialing. Without changes we will be unable to continue with any trials.

Remind one another to adhere to the protocols and measures that are in place at this trial to ensure everyone’s safety. This is a shared responsibility. Recognize that people may inadvertently slip up, and offer them a gentle kind reminder if necessary.

If any person consistently disregards the guidelines, whether inadvertently or intentionally, it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that unsafe behaviour is not permitted to continue, since it places everyone at risk. People not complying with the trial protocols and measures may be asked to leave the trial.

References

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) (2020). [Symptoms of COVID-19](#). (webpage).

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BC Ministry of Health & BCCDC (n.d.). [Coronavirus Prevention](#) (poster).

BC Ministry of Health & BCCDC (April 28, 2020). [Protecting workers at large industrial camps during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). (Guidelines). Appendix A.

BC Ministry of Health & BCCDC (n.d.). [Reduce the spread of COVID-19](#) (poster). BC Ministry of Health & BCCDC (n.d.). [Sick or self-isolating? Do not enter](#) (poster).

BC Provincial Government (May 13, 2020). [Key steps to safely operating your business or organization and reducing COVID-19 transmission](#).

BC Public Safety and Emergency Services (May 15, 2020). [BC's Restart Plan](#).

Bromage, Erin PhD (May 6, 2020). [The risks – know them—avoid them](#). Online blog.

Health Canada (May 9, 2020). [Hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#).

“Please, go outside”: [COVID-19 much less likely to spread outdoors](#), Dr. Bonnie Henry says. (April 29, 2020). CBC News.

Policy for Pandemics. Issue 21: [A harm reduction approach to physical distancing](#) (April 21, 2020). Edited by Andrew Potter PhD, Paisley Sim & Charlotte Reboul. Online newsletter.

Samuel, Sigal (April 24, 2020). [Why you're unlikely to get the coronavirus from runners or cyclists](#). Online publication by Vox.

ViaSPORT British Columbia (May 13, 2020). [British Columbia's return to sport. Frequently asked questions](#).

APPENDIX A

Capital Comets will email the following confirmation of entry (or similar) to registered competitors and registered volunteers 2 to 3 days before the trial:

Greetings. Thank you for entering the Capital Comets trial. We are excited to gather together as a club and celebrate with our friends and our four foots!

These are not usual times, so as part of our “new normal” we need to hear from you **before** the trial.

Looking forward to a great weekend!

Please reply to this email. Your reply indicates your agreement to the following:

I confirm that I have read the “Capital Comets—Trialling in the Time of COVID-19” guidelines and agree to comply with them.

I am currently free from any COVID-19 symptoms, including sore throat, coughing, sneezing, fever, and chills.

I have not been in contact with anyone with COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days.

I have not travelled outside of BC nor spent any time in contact with anyone from outside of BC in the past 14 days. (Persons from outside of BC who have completed a 14-day isolation period are exempt.)

I have completed and returned **the volunteer sign-up email**.