

New 2 H2O Orientation PWDCNC 2013

Welcome to the wacky, wonderful world of training your Portuguese Water Dog for our very own, breed-specific Water Trials! This brief introduction is an overview of what to expect from our Regional Water Practices, as well as basic training and equipment needs for the beginner.

1. Equipment. The beginning water practice team actually needs very little equipment to start. As in any dog sport, additional items can be purchased to make your life easier at practice and to increase both your enjoyment and the effectiveness of your training time with your dog. *You* will be in the water (not just your dog) – this is a team sport! So in addition to “water-wear,” such as a swimsuit or wet suit, here are the requirements of what you will need for the 2 beginning levels, plus some recommendations to make your training day more fun and enjoyable:
 - a. Junior Water Dog
 - i. Dog water harness
 - ii. Retrieving dummy
 - iii. Personal Flotation Device/PFD (life vest) for the handler
 - iv. Closed-toed shoes for the handler
 - b. Apprentice Water Dog – all of the items for Junior Water Dog, plus
 - i. Underwater retrieve article
 - ii. Float line
 - c. Additional recommendations:
 - i. Floating long line (a long leash to be used on your dog, especially if you are not sure how it will behave in public off-leash)
 - ii. Basket or gear bag to hold equipment
 - iii. Life vest for your dog (believe it or not, some PWDs actually need assistance to learn how to swim!)
 - iv. Large-brimmed hat to keep the sun off your face
 - v. Sunscreen and lip balm
 - vi. Ex-pen or crate for your dog
 - vii. Fabulous training treats or toys that you only use at water practice
 - viii. Towels (for trainer and dog)
 - ix. Dog Shampoo (bathing facilities are available for your dog)
 - x. Snacks and water (for you and your dog)

I have attached a list of some “favorites” of the water committee, as well as recommended websites.

2. Training. Basic obedience training is REALLY helpful when starting in Water Practice, but not essential, especially if you have a young puppy. For the Junior level, you are allowed to hold onto your dog's harness for many of the exercises. Even at the Apprentice level, you are allowed to gently guide your dog by the harness between exercises. Most judges will remind you of this, and even urge you to do so! If you don't have a solid "sit-stay," start practicing – you will be glad you did, since many of the exercises at the Apprentice level require a sit-stay.

Our water practices are just that – PRACTICE – no formal lessons are given during the practice time, although experienced handlers are happy to share with you what has helped them in the past. Of course every team is different, so "your mileage may vary." I would recommend that you read, and re-read, and then read again the PWDCA Water Manual, which is available on the PWDCA website to download. Someone from the water committee can answer your questions, just ask! There are some water camps available around the country where you can get intense training in the water, and if you have the time and resources to attend one, go for it!

Practice groups are arranged so that there are some advanced level teams working with beginning level teams. This helps the beginners see what they have to look forward to, as well as help even out the stewarding jobs throughout the day. Come to practice with a plan in mind as to what you want to accomplish with your dog when it is your time for a turn. Some people spend 5-10 minutes "playing" with their dog in the water with the equipment to familiarize their dog with the water and the equipment in a fun manner. Others will focus on retrieving at a short distance, then longer distances, until the dog is retrieving at full distance. Further on in the season (as the trial approaches), you may want to do a "dry run" of a trial, going straight through all of the exercises (in order) with a judge, land steward, and boat stewards.

At least once during the season, I strongly encourage you to pick up a slot on a day that you don't regularly practice. It is always helpful to see other practice groups; you may get different training tips and you definitely will get another perspective to training, not to mention meeting new people that share a passion for PWDs!

Water Practice here in Northern California is a time-consuming event, so if you are not ready to commit a half-day each week to traveling to Pleasanton, practicing with your dog, and stewarding for others, try picking up just a few slots during the first few weeks before you commit to the same slot all summer.

Equipment Suggestions – Where to Purchase

www.4myPWDs.com

4myPWDs is owned and operated by PWD owner Annie Herberholz in Washington State, who works and trains in water herself. She also sometimes brings equipment to our trial, saving you shipping costs! They have recommendations for every level as to the equipment you will need.

<http://www.caninewatersports.com>

Canine Water Sports is owned by an East Coast PWD Water judge. Similar equipment to 4mypwds, with a twist.

www.llbean.com

Wave Mocs
All-Person-Fit PFD

www.rei.com

MTI Livery PFD
Sunday Afternoons Adventure Hat
Ruff Wear K9 Float Coat

www.petsmart.com

Outward Hound life vest

www.westmarine.com

Schooner Bank cachalot (hat)
Aqua Socks

www.cabelas.com

Water dummies
PFDs, and other handler “goodies”

www.target.com

Water Shoes
Pop-up crate (not recommended for puppies or dogs that like to chew!)