

CARTING AND THE COLLIE



A home-made cart

TODAY few Collies have true carting jobs, but there are present-day carting/draft tests in which Collies may participate. Modern carting tests demonstrate a Collie's willingness to work as a teammate with his handler. It combines a Collie's mental acuity to understand specific commands, his physical dexterity, agility and strength to execute those commands smoothly and easily, and his desire to please his handler – all strong genetic characteristics of the Collie.



A Brace is two dogs harnessed together

BEFORE YOU BEGIN. Like any performance activity, it is prudent to have a veterinarian determine that your dog is physically fit for this type of work. If you have a young dog, ensure he has finished growing before starting in-cart training. You can, however, start teaching basic obedience control to a puppy as well as left and right turns from both your right and left side. Teach forward, stop, stand/stay, come and pace changes (slow, normal and fast). If these foundation skills are taught with kindness, positive reinforcement and patience, they will also build your Collie's confidence in himself as well as trust in you as team leader, along with a desire to work with you – teamwork is a major component of carting tests.



The Long Down in cart

HOW TO START. It can be difficult to find carting classes, workshops or, for that matter, any type of structured instruction for carting or draft work. Most people start by finding a mentor. The easiest way to find a mentor is to do a web search for upcoming carting/draft tests in your area. Most breed clubs that hold carting/draft tests have an "events" link on their website that advertises coming tests. Attend a variety of tests as an observer (or volunteer to help with the event) and take note of handlers who work kindly with their dogs; where the teamwork between dog and



Driving using reins

handler appears effortless and where there is mutual respect. Introduce yourself to these handlers and ask if they might direct you to someone in your area who might help you get started.



A sulky where the handler rides in the cart

CARTING/DRAFT TESTS vary, however, common elements include: harness, hitch and inspection of cart and harness; basic maneuvers (forward, halt, right turn, left turn and back up); a weight requirement; loading and unloading; various test levels (e.g., novice and advanced); and at least a portion of the test done in a public place and/or with distractions.



Harness & hitch

haul, with the teams rotating positions so all teams are in the front, rear and middle of the group at some point along the way.

WHAT ELSE? There is much more to owning a carting Collie than tests and titles. Your collie can haul garden refuse to the curb; vegetables and wood to the house and your show gear from your van to the grooming area. For those interested in community activities, carting can be part of parades, breed demonstrations;

EQUIPMENT. There are different types of harnesses and an amazing variety of carts, wagons and sulkies that can be used. A cart typically has 2 wheels; a wagon 4 wheels; and you ride in a sulky. Carts are generally the easiest and most cost-effective way to start. There are numerous websites selling carting equipment and a number with build-your-own designs. It is imperative that the harness fit properly and that your cart is properly balanced and adjusted to your dog. Your mentor's help will be invaluable here.



Fast pace on a loose lead

Variations include: how the basic maneuvers are demonstrated; the amount of weight, terrain, and distance the dog is required to pull said weight; position of the handler relative to the cart; and whether the dog is off or on leash/reins. Some programs include a backpacking component; others offer brace classes – 2 dogs working together in cart; yet others include more intricate maneuvers. Some organizations require an individual obedience portion; others require group stays in harness or in cart; and most require Advanced level dogs to complete a long-distance



Figure 8 on lead

school activities or therapy dog excursions. Carting has many extensions that are not only practical and educational, but also demonstrate the versatility and workability of our beautiful breed, the Collie.



An Advanced level Group "Long Haul" with a load

ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING CARTING/DRAFT TESTS: At present a number of organizations offer carting/draft programs. Some are open to all breeds while others give preference to their respective breeds, however, at the discretion of the host club, other breeds may compete and earn titles. Some organizations that allow all-breed participation include:

- American Working Collie Association
- Canadian Kennel Club
- Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America
- American Rottweiler Club
- Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Club of America
- Great Pyrenees Club of America
- National Entlebucher Mountain Dog Association



Back-packing



A simulated "Gate" exercise