

Vancouver Island Lure Coursing Association (Vilca)-Trialing in the Time of COVID-19

Vilca is grateful to Team Okanagan and The Capital Comets Dog Sports Club 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 trialing 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.

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 nonmedical 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 Vilca 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 45 people to allow for a comfortable buffer under the current 50-person limit, and to allow for the judge and potentially a few non-competing volunteers.
- Entry will be online, and electronic payment is preferred.

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 VILCA an email confirmation and are required to reply to it, thus indicating that they agree to follow VILCA's 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.)

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.

Guidelines for Running a VILCA Trial at the Cowichan Exhibition Grounds

Physical Distancing

The default physical distance is 6 feet at all times. 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 gate volunteer will be responsible for calling out names from the list and ensuring that dog-and-handler teams enter the ring in a timely manner.

There will be a running order with dogs in flights of 5 placed on an easle, please, **DO NOT CONGREGATE THERE**. Entrants are responsible for listening for their name being called out and for being at the gate on time.

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

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. Vilca 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. Vilca 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 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.

Ribbons and Titles

Ribbons will not be self-serve. They will be handled by one designated person, who will hand sanitize before doing so.

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 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

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