Search and Rescue Dogs of Ontario Association

Human Remains Detection

Purpose: This rubric is designed to evaluate a dog's potential for Search and Rescue (SAR) work based on their performance in various exercises in order to permit the team to go for third party validation.

Criteria:

Evaluation Areas:

Teams will complete **three (3) separate areas**, evaluated individually.

- **Brush, Field, Urban (rubble/buildings/vehicles)**
- **Area size:** 18 × 18 m to 30 × 30 m
- **Two areas contain four (4) HRD scent sources**
- **One area is a negative area** (no purposely-placed human remains scent)
- Scent sources may be:
  - Ground level
  - Under debris up to 1 meter
  - Elevated or hanging up to 2 meters
  - Lightly hidden, placed on objects, or placed on items contaminated with human decomposition fluids
- Fluids may be placed on items including: clothing, knives, rocks, trees
- Scent sources are set **30-60 minutes prior to testing**
- Handler must **declare finds OR declare the area clear** before progressing to the next area
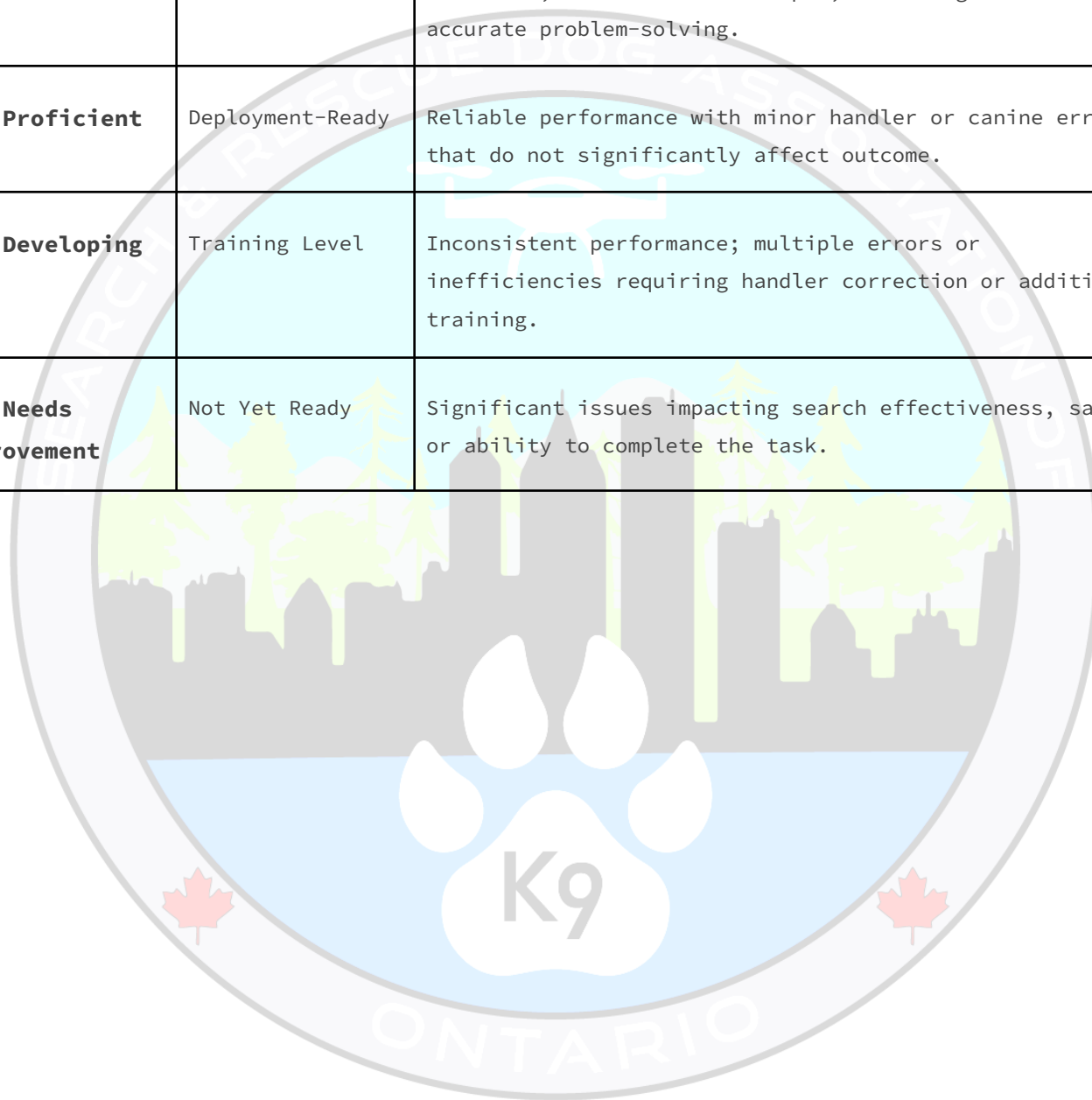
Distractions:

Distractions may be placed in any or all areas:

- **Animal remains**
- **Clothing or fabric distractions**
- **Workers or other canines nearby**
- Environmental scent contamination already present in evaluation locations
  All distraction materials placed 30-60 minutes before testing.
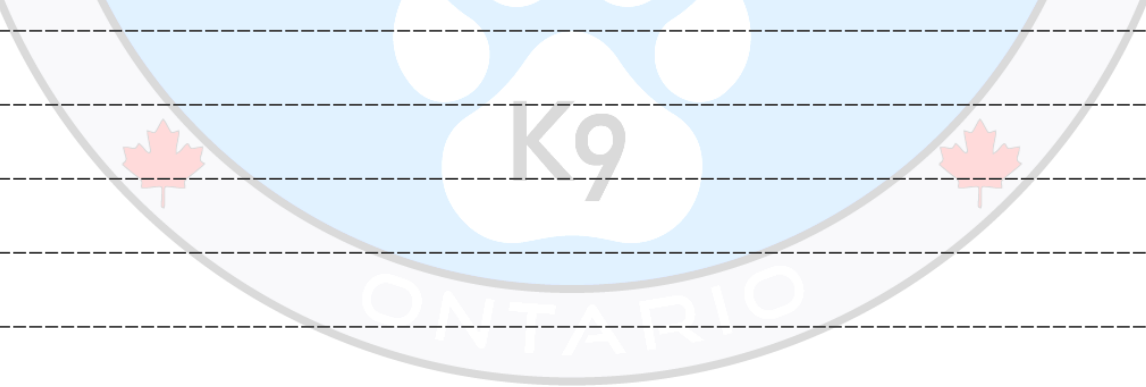
  Total Time: 2 hours

SCORING SCALE

Score	Descriptor	Definition
4 – Excellent	Operational Level	Performance demonstrates strong mastery. Efficient, confident, minimal handler input, clear dog behaviour, accurate problem-solving.
3 – Proficient	Deployment-Ready	Reliable performance with minor handler or canine errors that do not significantly affect outcome.
2 – Developing	Training Level	Inconsistent performance; multiple errors or inefficiencies requiring handler correction or additional training.
1 – Needs Improvement	Not Yet Ready	Significant issues impacting search effectiveness, safety, or ability to complete the task.

1. Pre-Search Readiness & Deployment Strategy

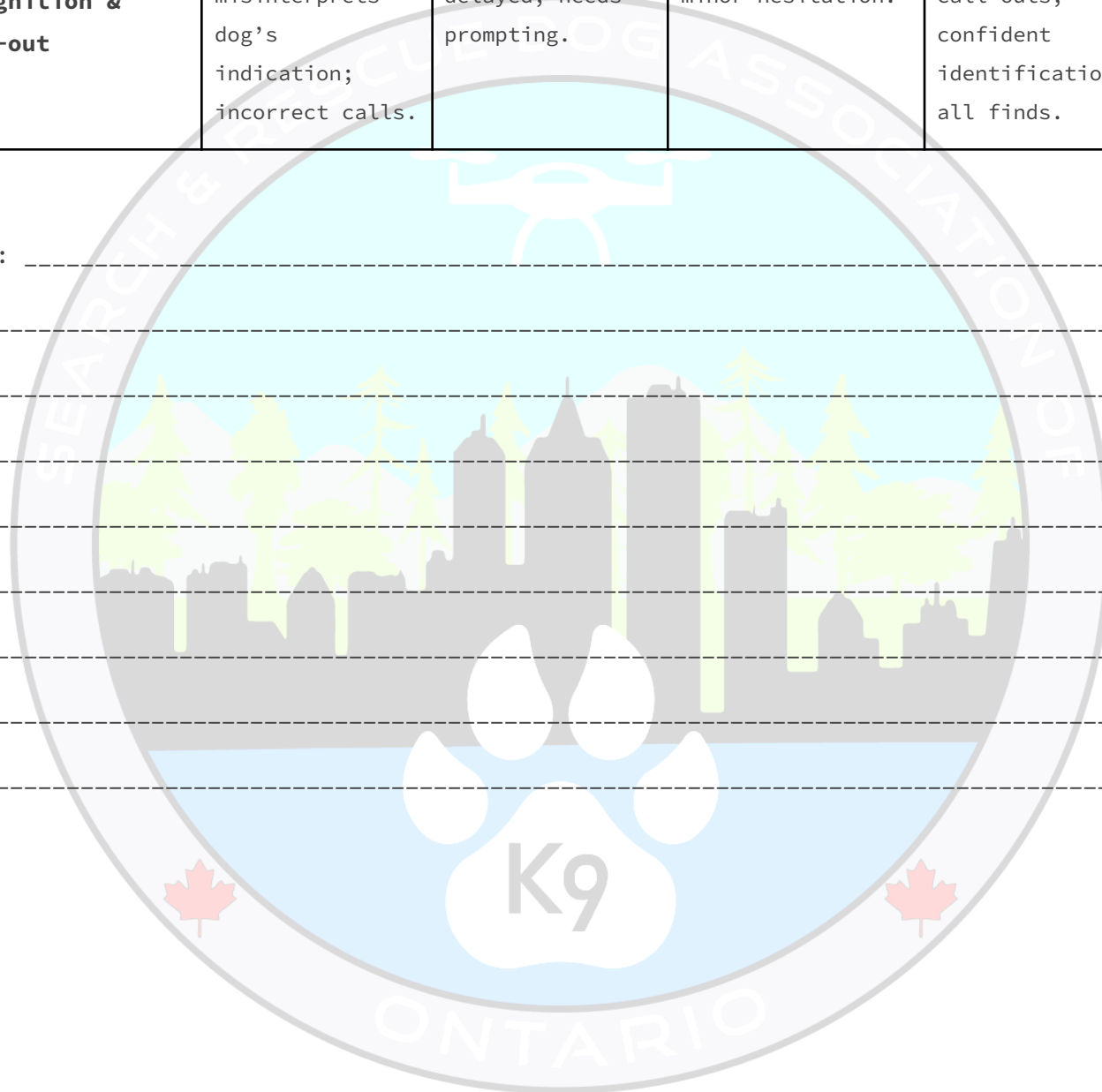| Criteria	1	2	3	4
Briefing comprehension & area planning	Does not understand assignment or struggles to plan search approach.	Understands assignment but plan is unclear or inefficient.	Solid understanding; plan is generally effective.	Clear, logical plan; demonstrates strong situational analysis.
Equipment readiness	Missing critical gear; unsafe setup.	Minor missing elements; needs prompting.	Proper gear; prepared with minor adjustments.	Fully prepared, efficient, professional readiness.
Canine start-line focus	Dog unfocused, overstimulated.	Dog somewhat distracted; slow to settle.	Dog ready with minor warm-up needed.	Dog engaged, controlled, responsive, and ready to work.

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2. HRD Search Performance - Brush, Field, and Urban

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Search strategy & coverage	No strategy; misses major sections.	Inconsistent coverage; significant gaps.	Effective coverage with minor inefficiencies.	Highly systematic, efficient, and adaptive to terrain and scent behaviour.
Odour acquisition & problem-solving	Unable to acquire or follow scent; repeated failures.	Acquires odour inconsistently; significant handler help needed.	Solid sourcing with minor errors.	Excellent independent scenting; strong bracketing, pinpointing, and scent-cone recognition.
Response to elevation & concealment	Fails to locate elevated/covered sources; no change of behaviour.	Delayed or inconsistent recognition of elevated or hidden sources.	Recognizes elevated/concealed odour with minor guidance.	Quickly identifies elevated or hidden sources; strong vertical scenting.
Distraction management	Distracted by animal remains, workers, or other dogs; abandons task.	Multiple distractions requiring handler intervention.	Mild distraction but remains workable.	Ignores or quickly dismisses distractions; stays on HRD task.

Final response / Indication	Incorrect, absent, or unreliable.	Slow, unclear, or inconsistent.	Clear final response; minor clarification needed.	Strong, decisive, reliable final indication at all valid sources.
Handler recognition & call-out	Misses or misinterprets dog's indication; incorrect calls.	Hesitant or delayed; needs prompting.	Correct calls with minor hesitation.	Accurate, timely call-outs; confident identification of all finds.

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3. Negative Area Performance

(Critical for HRD operational reliability)

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Search thoroughness	Fails to cover negative area adequately.	Inconsistent coverage; gaps present.	Good coverage; minor inefficiencies.	Thorough, systematic search confirming absence of HRD scent.
Behaviour in absence of HRD odour	False alerts; repeated inappropriate indications.	Uncertainty, stress, or repeated checking of distractions.	Stable behaviour with minor uncertainty.	Confident, neutral, and consistent behaviour with **no false indications**.
Clear-area declaration	Incorrect declaration; unsafe or premature.	Hesitant or delayed; requires guidance.	Correct declaration with minor uncertainty.	Timely, confident, and accurate declaration of negative area.

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4. Team Dynamics & Safety

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Handler situational awareness	Poor awareness; safety concerns.	Inconsistent awareness; minor risks.	Good awareness with minor misses.	Excellent awareness; anticipates risks.
Dog management & control	Dog unsafe, uncontrolled, or repeatedly leaving search area.	Dog occasionally out of control; needs major correction.	Dog well controlled with minor adjustments.	Dog consistently controlled; excellent search drive and obedience.
Environmental navigation	Struggles with terrain, obstacles, or urban hazards.	Handles terrain with difficulty.	Navigates safely with minor inefficiencies.	Moves through all environments confidently and safely.

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5. Completion Standards

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Number of finds completed	Fails required finds.	Finds incomplete or incorrect.	All finds completed with minor issues.	All finds completed accurately and efficiently.
Time management	Unable to finish within 1 hour.	Finishes late or rushes excessively.	Completes within time with minor delays.	Excellent pacing; finishes confidently within time.

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PASS / FAIL

Evaluator Notes:

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