

GUIDELINES FOR LURE OPERATING



AN AMERICAN SIGHTHOUND FIELD ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION

Revised 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The ASFA Field Trial Improvement Committee has put together these guidelines to encourage, educate and provide potential lure operators with ideas and information. Experienced coursing people from around the country have been willing to share their expertise to assist others in becoming competent lure operators.

While we are providing you with information, the best way to learn is to observe experienced ASFA lure operators, share ideas, and practice under the guidance of an experienced operator. Unlike other field trial jobs such as field trial secretary, paddock or inspection, lure operating is not something that you can just learn the rules and know how to do. It takes time and years of practice along with asking many questions along the way to become a competent lure operator. We feel these guidelines will assist you as you move into the exciting and challenging role of a lure operator.

The Field Trial Improvement Committee would like to thank the individuals that were willing to share their philosophies regarding lure operating. You'll discover there are a wide variety of views and theories on the best way to operate the lure. There seems to be a consensus from all operators that the ultimate goal is for each course to be as safe as possible while allowing the hounds to demonstrate their abilities. Experienced people from the fancy who have lure coursed a particular breed for a number of years were asked to offer their expertise on the breed running style as well as suggestions on how to operate the lure for that particular breed. And, since a picture is indeed worth a thousand words, we asked photographers to contribute to these guidelines. Their contributions are appreciated: Kevin Bryson (Leaping Lizards Photos), Mitch Burt & Amy Balthrop (Synesthesia Studios), and Dan Gauss (Shot on Site). Special thanks to Jill Bryson for allowing us to use the beautiful Leaping Lizards photographs shot by her late husband, Kevin Bryson.

The Committee feels these guidelines will provide insight into some of the attributes and skills required to be a competent lure operator. We hope that it will help the participants attending ASFA trials appreciate the key role the lure operator plays in the success of any trial and that it will help recruit more lure operators from the ranks of the lure coursing community.

--Doug Bollen (Former Region 9 RD) and Janie Hale (Former Region 3 RD)

I. LURE OPERATOR GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

SO YOU WANT TO BECOME A LURE OPERATOR

Janie Hale (Regional Director Region 3)

The following guidelines, if followed, will help you become a successful lure operator.

- Read the ASFA Running Rules and Field Procedures for Lure Field Trials and pay particular attention to the entries regarding lure operators. (See the index at the back of the book)
- Spend time watching experienced operators run the lure. Take notes and write down questions so you can get feedback from the lure operator at an appropriate time.
- Talk with judges, experienced lure operators and breed enthusiasts regarding the running style of each breed.
- Watch each of the breeds run. Note how each running style impacts how the lure is operated.
- Learn about the equipment. Learn how to set it up, run it and troubleshoot problems. Review the ASFA Guidelines For Course Design book.
- Set up the equipment and discuss the course design with experienced lure operators. This should be done on multiple fields with various types of terrain.
- Run the lure equipment multiple times without dogs. This will give you a good feel for how it moves and sounds.
- At practices with an experienced operator standing by your side, run the lure for single dogs. (Do not make the mistake of running the lure for multiple dogs before you're really ready.)
- With an experienced operator standing by, run the lure when two dogs are running. (Start out with the slower running breeds.)
- When you are confident with two dogs running, try it with three. (Have an experienced operator at your side to give suggestions during the course.)
- When you're confident, run the lure for some of the "slower" breeds at an actual trial. Ask for feedback from the judges and experienced lure operators at the trial.
- After you are running the lure yourself, continue to ask more experienced operators to critique how you're doing.
- Request feedback from the judges at the trials at which you're operating the lure.
- Practice, practice and practice some more. Learn from your mistakes. Good lure operators never stop learning.
- Don't succumb to the pressure to run the lure at a trial before you're ready. Give yourself enough time to gain experience and confidence.

Have FUN! You've got one of the "best seats in the house."

II. COMMENTS FROM EXPERIENCED LURE OPERATORS

Thank you, Beth Coney, Mike Downey, Barry Draycott, Michael Ferris, Sean McMichael, Denny Reed, Dennis Seeley, Harry Van Vliet and Steve Wiley for your willingness to share your views on lure operating.

I would like to become a lure operator, what do I need to do?

TIPS FOR NEW LURE OPERATORS:

Remember your first responsibility is not to the judges, not to the exhibitors, but to the safety of the hounds - first, foremost, and always. This takes your undivided attention 100% of the time you are on the ladder. Secondly, try to ensure each hound you run the lure for has the opportunity for the best course it can demonstrate. Give the hounds a chance, be fair and honest with them. Don't play games, don't get cute trying to "control" the course, it can be too dangerous. Then practice and practice some more, every single time you have the opportunity, and learn from your inevitable mistakes! We all make them. Learn and get on with it. I've gleaned a lot from watching others operate, having lure ops watch and offer suggestions on what I do, and talking to lure ops from other areas of the country. Never stop learning. The hounds will teach you the most.

--Beth Coney

You need to know what the objective of this game is: To give the hounds a visual stimulus that remains in sight and at the proper distance in front of them to allow them to safely negotiate all turns and recover.

--Mike Downey

Watch the lure while it is being run for the hounds. Be aware of the distance that is being kept between the lure and the hounds. Be aware of how the hounds react to the lure. The more you do this, the better prepared you will be. After you have observed for awhile, approach an experienced lure operator (LO) and express your interest in learning to lure operate. If s/he agrees to take you under their wing you should spend a lot of time watching how the lure is run and discussing each course after its completion. Learning to be a good LO takes a lot of time, don't rush it.

--Barry Draycott

Practice, practice, and practice. There is no substitute for experience and just when you think you've seen it all, there is always a hound determined to show you something different. Also take the time to learn the running styles of each breed. Be patient, good lure operators don't happen overnight. Be prepared to face criticism, as handlers will undoubtedly question your ability. Some of it is sour grapes, but often it is criticism that you will be able to learn from.

--Michael Ferris

To become a lure operator is easy, to become a good lure operator is a lot of hard work, to become a damn good lure operator is a lengthy process that involves a lot of time, physical labor and discomfort. Lure operating involves the ability to maintain situational awareness regardless of what's going on around you. Finally, it involves the ability to separate yourself into two personalities: the professional lure operator and the coursing enthusiast. First, you start out by watching other lure operators, good and bad. See how the LO handles tricky corners, running a line over a hill and keeping the dogs sighted, cross-overs, rainy weather etc. Don't be

shy about asking the LO if you can stand close by and watch how the LO operates the lure. To sum it up, there's an awful lot of homework and practicing to do before you take the button at a trial. Start slow and build your expertise and confidence. Always ask questions and never stop learning.

--Sean McMichael

Seek counseling immediately!!! You can't be thin skinned and the main thing to remember is you can't please all of the people all the time. If you're doing the best you can and you're pleased with how you did it, then that's all that counts. If you're not pleased with it, then you need to evaluate what you need to do differently. I think a lot of lure operation is based on instinct and no two courses are ever the same. You need to adapt to different situations as they happen and there are no hard and set rules as to what to do at any certain time. You have to use your experience and natural instinct in a variety of situations.

--Denny Reed

I was taught by one of the best operators around, Lynn Fill. I tell new operators the same thing he told me, " PRACTICE, PRACTICE and then PRACTICE with dogs." Volunteer to run practices after trials and watch other operators. Some will talk you through a course. Remember you are trying to show the judges what the dogs can do, not how good you are in getting the lure around the course. When I run the lure I am the lure.

--Dennis Seeley

Five rules for lure operators:

1. The safety of the dogs is the most important consideration. Never move a lure when a dog has the lure in his mouth or is against the line.
2. Never give the lure to a cheating dog. Always favor the dog that is following the lure.
3. Do not plant dogs in a corner because this favors slow dogs. Always give dogs sufficient room to turn before reaching the corner.
4. Do not get into a race with a dog because this will make it difficult to evaluate agility.
5. You should try to show all aspects of sighthound performance with your lure operation.

Although these rules may sound simple, they are not always easy to follow. I try to keep them in mind when I run the lure and when they are followed, a good lure course generally follows. It is one thing to run the lure successfully for a single dog, but how about the situation when one dog follows well and the others cheat severely? How do you keep from racing the dogs or penalizing the honest dogs when the dogs themselves won't cooperate? That is both the hardest and most satisfying part of lure operation. It requires skill, dedication and lots of practice to become really good at operating the lure. There are few things more satisfying however, than running a good course and making the dogs stay honest when they want so badly to cheat.

--Steve Wiley

EQUIPMENT AND COURSE DESIGN:

Know your equipment inside out. That's the easy part, I think. Know your field - how hard the ground can get, soft or boggy spots, what areas hounds "never will run into," the natural barriers and hills that back dogs off corners and decrease their speed, the way you can use your terrain to help set up turns, etc. As far as course design goes, I believe simpler & longer is better. Many great courses can be set with 8 pulleys. I'd rather use a pulley than a tie-down. I'd prefer to take out a pulley and lengthen a line slightly, rather than adding a pulley to "smooth out" a tight corner. Putting more hardware on the field won't make hounds turn an overly sharp corner in better form - that's your job to set hounds up fairly for turns. If the turn is ridiculously tight, change it. Sometimes, to get hounds to run the track you want on a particular field, you may have to set the line "off-track" by 20 or 30 yards. Don't forget about "run tight-to-the-line" fast breeds if you do this. But it often works well. About lures; I feel hounds run tighter to the line, and pay more attention, with 2 smaller lures set three or four feet apart on the line, versus three huge garbage bags flapping in the wind ten feet apart. With a 20 foot "target," it's no wonder hounds start cutting.

--Beth Coney

Know your machine capabilities for quick response and coast time. Know the course! Be sure you can see ALL of the course. Either run the lure for the test dog or be sure to watch and see where the fast dogs will get you in trouble. See where the "cutters" will do you in. Have an assistant at your machine at all times to release the string in case of an entangled hound.

--Mike Downey

Of course running the lure is only one of the duties of the LO. The LO is also in charge of the equipment and the setup of the field. Your mentor is extremely important in teaching these duties. Learning how the equipment works is not that difficult. Simply put, it's a matter of understanding how to get power to the lure machine. Always make sure that the batteries are fully charged before the trials. Check all connections, making sure that they are clean and tight. I suggest that batteries be hooked up to a running vehicle during the trial to keep them fully charged. I have found that this method adds to the life of the battery. Batteries that are not being charged during the trial will most likely not last the day. Therefore, extra batteries must be on hand. Actually, it's best to have back ups for all equipment ready to go. Always check the pulleys before using them. Pulleys that do not turn freely will cause unnecessary drag on the machine. Make sure that the string is in good condition.

Setting up the field is an art unto itself. Learn from experienced people how to do this. Walk with them while the field is being set and ask questions. The course plan should conform as close as possible to what is printed in the premium. However, safety is the prime concern. Many times, what looks good on paper may not work on the field. Some things to look for are:

1. Turns at the bottom of hills. They should be avoided because it's much harder for a hound to make a turn while running down hill.
2. Obstacles such as holes, rocks, trees, ruts, stumps, etc.
3. The angle of the turn in relation to the one before and after. If it's too sharp you might add another pulley to soften the turn.
4. The height of the string should always be less than ankle high. Use hold downs or move a corner pulley to get the proper height.
5. When designing a course plan, you should be aware of any visual obstacles that the hounds will be looking at. An experienced hound will see a tree line and know that the lure is not going into it. The hound will usually cut the corner to try to intercept the lure rather than follow it. While this may be a good hunting technique, chances are a judge

will give the hound a lower score. A cutting hound will also make your job as LO much more difficult.

Much of this can be avoided by setting the runup towards the center of the field and making the first turn before any visual obstacle.

--Barry Draycott

Always try to learn something from the course that was just completed. Ask yourself what you would do differently if the same situation arises.

--Mike Ferris

Listen to the machine as it runs. Learn how the machine should sound when it's running good so you'll be ready when something goes wrong. You can hear when extra strain is put on the machine, when someone is standing on the line or a dog is caught in the line. That high-pitched sound that means there's no load on the line and it just broke or came off the pulley. Being up close is how you learn to take care of the machinery. Oh yeah, definitely learn how to tie knots that won't come untied. Always carry a knife for cutting the string. I don't care how good someone runs the lure for the dogs, if he can't take care of the equipment, he's not a real LO. With enough experience, you can hear the machine and tell how hard the dogs are pushing the lure. As you're standing there, remember that you don't learn much just by watching your own breed run.

ASFA developed and sells an excellent booklet on designing courses. A copy was sent to every club. When I first started coursing, I kept every premium list I could get my hands on so I could go over the course designs and take the best elements to design my own. Try some designs at a club practice. Make someone else real happy and offer to draw up the course designs for your next trial.

Here's where knowing the running styles comes in handy. It's easy to draw up a course that makes Whippet or Greyhound folks happy. It's easy to draw up a course that will make Pharaoh and Afghan owners happy. Putting it all together in one design that will showcase the running abilities of all the breeds is the challenge. For a two-day trial, I usually set up a fast running course one day so the speedsters can show off and then do an agility course so the smaller, quick turning breeds can show their stuff.

Remember, you want to challenge the dogs. You don't want the dogs getting bored running the same old course three or four times a year. Here are some things to consider when designing a course:

1. The time of year the trial is held. Is it hot, cold, getting dark early?
2. Is it the first trial of the season when a "tune up trial" would be beneficial to get the couch potatoes up and moving after a long winters' rest, or is it a middle of the season trial when hounds are running fit and fast?
3. How much space is available?
4. What's the condition of your field—rocky, grassy, corn stalks, dry, wet, etc.

All these factors play into the decisions on how you set the course in terms of length and the types of angles you can get away with on the pulleys. Failure to take these four areas into consideration quickly brings the participant's wrath down upon that "idiot" who designed such a stupid course.

--Sean McMichael

Actual running is based on experience and knowledge of what the different breeds are going to do on any given course plan. Make sure you take into consideration all the breeds. If you set up a course that would be good for one breed, it may be terrible for one or two or more of the others. The best way to set it up is to have a little bit of everything, a few close corners for agility, yet some longer straightaways for the faster breeds. Keep in mind that you can't please

everybody. When the judges walk it first thing, listen to them and if something needs to be changed, change it. If the judges are happy with it, they are the ones judging it, so it should be fine. Spectators should have no input at this point because a lot of them are only looking at their own breed.

--Denny Reed

Always walk the course or help set up the course. Run it at least once before the test dog, to get the feel of the equipment. Don't run the dogs if you are not satisfied the equipment is running well.

--Dennis Seeley

Never fail to walk the course that you're entrusted to guide someone's beloved hound around. The ASFA Running Rules state that the lure operator will lay out the course, but many lure operators are not always involved in this task each time they take the assignment to hold the button in hand. I find this practice (walking the course) also helps me to think my way around the course from the hounds perspective and hopefully to give them a better effort from the ladder! Know the equipment you will be running. I have accepted lure operator assignments from clubs with very different equipment setups from what my club uses. A few minutes spent with a knowledgeable member from the club furnishing the equipment gives me added confidence for my task.

--Harry Van Vliet

A very important aspect of lure course design that can have a profound effect on running the lure is the visual obstacles on the field. The pattern that dogs run is dictated not only by where the lure goes, but also by visual obstacles. If a lure is running a straight line towards a fence, dogs know it will turn. Lures never go through fences. They always turn. In a situation like this, the intelligent dogs will try to guess the turn well before it actually occurs, resulting in a cut or "cheat". Most lure courses are run in a visually constrained environment and dogs learn to predict where the lure will turn based on visual cues. The lack of such cues can actually produce quite surprising results.

--Steve Wiley

RUNNING THE LURE:

Lure ops can (and intentionally do) signal turns to dogs all the time. All you have to do is be consistent with them. Most experienced FCH dogs train fast and pick up on how "this lure op works" pretty quickly during a course. Borzoi are the best example of this. They do not forgive being tricked, dumped or over-run. They size up a lure op immediately, and will back off committing to hard running in a course in a second.

Lure ops do different things to signal turns: One is to hold a certain relative distance in front of the dogs consistently down the straights, then smoothly pull the lure out another five yards or so before any turns. Most experienced dogs will pick up on this right away and start to set themselves up for a turn when the lure goes further out. Another is to give the lure a little "jerk-jerk" about 30 yards in front of a turn. Again, the dogs pick up on this by the end of the course and usually will run harder through turns as they know one is coming. This obviously doesn't apply to silly little herky-jerky course plans on tiny fields.

Ever see field trials where dogs consistently run "better and faster", with more abandon, during the finals versus the prelims? It's not always the reversal of the course plan that improves the running of the field. Very often the lure op has "taught" those dogs during the prelims that they can "trust" the lure op not to bury them, dump them or hurt them. They've learned it's "safe" to run all out. So they do.

--Beth Coney

Watch the hound that is in the lead and on the lure. All others are to be dealt with only if they are cutting and causing danger to the lead dog and themselves. Never worry about slow dogs not seeing the lure and try to wait for them. You will get the fast dog hurt diving and grabbing at the lure that is too close to him. You will also cause the lead dog to get buried in a turn that could cause injury and at least ruin his run.

--Mike Downey

Run the lure around the course several times without a hound chasing it. Use this practice to feel how the lure responds to your touch, and try varying the speed. Now, continue running it around until you are sure that you know where each pulley is placed on the field. This is extremely important. You must know their locations in order to give the proper lead into each turn. While you are doing this, your mentor should be commenting on what you're doing. When he feels confident that you are ready, you should run the lure for a single hound. It is usually best to start with one of the slower breeds. Do this as many times as possible with your mentor commenting on every course. He should also be ready to stop the lure at any time, because at this point he can probably react quicker than you to possible problems. When your mentor decides you are ready, then you should run the lure for two hounds of the same breed you have been practicing on. Then with three hounds as you become more comfortable.

--Barry Draycott

Learn how a dog reacts to the lure. You have to watch all the breeds course. There's no way I'd run the lure for the Basenji the way I'd run it for a Saluki. It just wouldn't work. You have to learn the difference between lure coursing and lure racing. Some dogs will never go in on the bunny for a "kill". They will just run beside it. Racing is not the intent of the sport. I think you have to run the lure for the dog who is actually coursing the bunny and wants to "kill" it. This brings up the topic of running the lure for the lead dog vs. the cutting dog. If Dog A cuts half the course and finishes first, should he score higher than Dog B that ran the whole course clearly turning only when the lure turned and finished last? I try not to let that happen. Nine times out of ten, when faced with a dog cutting so badly that if I ran the lure up in front of him the others would be knocked out of the run I'll let him catch it rather than hose the other dogs. I'd rather see a clean restart than an undeserved high score. One of the best ways to keep a cutting dog from taking advantage is with a good course design.

--Sean McMichael

My advice would be to stand near enough to the lure operator to hear the lure and still see the lure on the field. Listen to how the LO presses the button compared to what the lure is doing on the field. In my opinion the best lure operators are the ones that hit the button very quickly. If you have someone who holds down too long and lets up too long, the lure is being jerked way ahead and then it is too close to the dogs. By doing a lot of quick hits on the button you can keep the distance ahead of the dogs more constant. By listening to the sound and seeing what the lure is doing, you can hopefully imagine what you need to do on the button by watching the lure. It does absolutely no good to watch the lure operator himself without watching the lure.

--Denny Reed

In a lure course, the judges must determine which dogs have the best performance. But that performance can only be judged if the dogs have an opportunity to show their stuff. This is where a lure operator can either make or break the course. We must give dogs the opportunity to show what they can do. This allows the judges to make the best decision regarding each

dog's relative performance. So what is the best way to test dogs? The aim is not to race the dogs (although this might be difficult to believe after watching some lure operators at work). The aim is to provide an opportunity for the dog to show its ability in speed, agility, follow, enthusiasm and endurance. At the very least, this means that the dog must turn corners. Although I know some owners of fast dogs that would prefer a lure course designed like an oval, that is not the point of a lure course. In fact, oval and straight-track racing are sports in which fast dogs can show off their particular skills. Lure coursing is a different sport and should be appreciated as such. Dogs should display an ability to turn in lure coursing and to turn well. You would think that getting dogs to turn corners would be simple, but in fact, this is the most difficult aspect of both designing and running a lure course. Turning is hard work and most dogs would prefer to do it as little as possible. There are some slow breeds, such as Basenji, where turning is not so difficult and others, such as Greyhounds where it is a major undertaking. I remember one lure trial where there was an embankment 30 yards past one of the corners. We were running the lure so that it turned long before any of the Greyhounds reached the corner. We were surprised to see that fast dogs would insist on shooting right past the corner without even attempting to turn. They would then bank their turn off the embankment and resume the race. The Greyhounds understood how to use the terrain to their advantage. Why spend the effort to make a tight corner when you could use an embankment to make it easier?

--Steve Wiley

SAFETY:

If the lure op is up on a ladder or platform, in a pickup truck bed, or more than several feet from the equipment, there **MUST** be a ground man at the machine. Period. The huntmaster, far away, doesn't count. Solenoids stick, hounds get wrapped in the line, etc. Never take your eyes off the hounds if there has been a mid-course stop or breakdown. If hounds are off leash on the field, the lure op must keep his eyes on what's happening at all times. Never hesitate to stop the course if you feel a dangerous situation is developing - and the lure op should hopefully be the first to know! A good huntmaster or ground man will also help keep the lure op informed if a hound gets loose from the gallery, or if a hound that quit is running back onto the field from out of the lure ops line of sight. If you know your equipment, you can feel through the button and by the noise of the machine & line when a hound steps on the line while running, or when you have a hound brushing continually against the line - if this is happening, get off the button! Better to have a hound catch the lure and have to have a restart, than injure a hound.

--Beth Coney

I enjoy making the courses safe and seeing that each and every hound gets a fair chance to show their stuff. First, I want to say I choose a lure event in which to participate by the lure operator and field design more than any thought for who's judging.

--Mike Downey

I believe that before a prospective LO even touches the button, he must understand the principles of safety. The LO is the only person at a trial who can hurt a hound. You must understand how this can happen before you can run the lure for a hound. First, you must know how to stop the lure in the fastest, safest way possible if a hound becomes entangled in the line. Moving line can cut through soft tissue almost instantly.

--Barry Draycott

A lure operator must be aware of potentially dangerous situations and not be afraid to take his finger off the button. Much better to let the hounds catch the lure than risk the safety of any of them.

--Mike Ferris

Develop a professional demeanor about lure operating. The LO has more to do for the safety of the hounds than anyone on the field. I won't go into the horror stories about dogs getting hurt/killed by how the lure was operated. There's also plenty of examples of how the lead dog got buried in the corner, couldn't recover and lost the heat because of it. You have to maintain what we in the military call "situational awareness". You can't totally focus on that lead dog you're running the lure for. How about those two people on horseback that are going to ride across the field (standard situation of Lexington)? You have to wonder what happened to the pink dog that ran off the field after the second corner. Is it looking for a crate or getting ready to charge back on the field? You have to listen to the machine. Can you tell the difference between a dying battery and a dog caught in the line? Are you listening for the judge's whistle or the Huntmasters call to stop the lure? The bad thing is, even if you do everything right, you're still going to have a problem sooner or later. If you're going to survive emotionally as an operator, you have to realize that "stuff happens". Deal with it and move on. I've seen some good LOs quit because they took criticisms personally instead of professionally. There will always be the dissatisfied owner. Take constructive criticism, especially from the judges. If you're having a problem working the dogs through some area of the course, ask the judges if they have any ideas on how you can handle it better. They have a different perspective on the field from where they're located and may be able to see something you can't. Eventually, no matter how careful you are, a hound will be injured while you're running the lure. Don't panic, stay professional, the owner of the hound will be hysterical enough for both of you. It's your job to keep the situation from getting any worse. You will make mistakes in running the lure, we all have and will do so again.

--Sean McMichael

For the safety of the dogs—if in doubt STOP, but not at a pulley. Learn how the breeds run. SAFETY, SAFETY.

--Dennis Seeley

Number one by a large margin is safety of the dogs. Always try to have a spotter near you to keep an eye on a dog that is not on the lure and may get caught in the string. When you can't hear over the lure machine, this spotter can help listen for the judges when they say to stop the lure. If a cutting dog is coming at an angle where there would be a chance of a collision, stop the lure immediately. If they are going to collide, it's a lot better that it's done at a low speed rather than full speed. Always be open to suggestions especially from judges. I've had judges who have a different angle on a certain corner tell me they'd like to see a little more speed going into it, when from my angle it may have looked fine. Listen to suggestions from other people. Use the ones you want and disregard the others because a big percentage of the time they come from people who have never run the lure and don't know what they are talking about.

--Denny Reed

THINGS YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU:

Good lure operation isn't really noticeable, except in it's absence - and every lure op has days like those! Just take a deep breath, and keep going. With good lure operation, the hounds and courses run very smoothly. Hounds seem to flow easily around the course, without a lot of over-running of the line, stops and starts, center-surfing, speed changes, etc. Run the lure for the honest, working hound or hounds (and this may change off during a course - especially with Borzoi) and in return for their efforts, be fair and consistent in your lure operation to the hounds. Remember, the lure op has the best seat in the house, and really is the only person on the field who gets to enjoy the thrill of running with the hounds.

--Beth Coney

I wish that I had been to the open field before ever participating in lure events. I think the "coursing" concept and the dogs abilities are more readily realized. I believe I could have done a more efficient lure operating job with better knowledge of running styles. The operation of the electronics and the lure machine are only achieved with actual practice.

--Mike Downey

Even the best lure operators have bad days from time to time.

--Michael Ferris

First, have your head examined. If it's determined you're no longer sane, you've taken the first necessary step towards becoming a lure operator. Second, take up weightlifting, those batteries, pulleys and machines weigh a ton at the end of the day. Also, at the end of a long, cold, rainy weekend, the Maytag repairman's not the only guy feeling real lonely.

--Sean McMichael

A couple of rules you can throw out the window. 1) Under certain circumstances the "10 to 30 yards in front of the lead dog" rule - sometimes going into a hard corner, 30 yards is not enough, and sometimes on the straights, 10 yards is not enough for the faster dogs because they'll be bunching up instead of stretching out. 2) If you want to finish the trial before dark then forget the "always run for the lead dog on the lure" - if you do this, you will have cutting dogs catch the lure a large percentage of the time. This is a hard one to learn but hopefully on the next corner you will make it up for the dog that you penalized on the turn before. In my opinion the cutting dogs will take themselves out of it more than you will penalize the dog that is following well.

--Denny Reed

Dress for success, this cliché has some truth on the coursing field. Plan and pack for the worst extremes of weather one might possibly expect for the season. A warm jacket, a sturdy rain coat, comfortable shoes or boots, gloves, sunglasses and hats all can help a lure operator remain more attentively focused on the demands of running the lure.

--Harry Van Vliet

III. HELPFUL HINTS

SOME DOS & DON'TS OF LURE COURSING

--Doug Bollen (Former Region 9 Regional Director)

DO:

- ✓ Always put safety first in lure operation.
- ✓ Know the course in your mind and where each corner is.
- ✓ Walk the course before you start.
- ✓ Always run a test hound initially and again upon reversing or changing the course layout.
- ✓ Always review the course with the judges before the trial.
- ✓ Always check the equipment before operating the lure to make sure it is in good condition.
- ✓ Always make sure you have a good view of the entire course.
- ✓ Take lure operating very seriously and always give your complete attention and concentration to
- ✓ the hounds coursing.
- ✓ Keep the lure a good distance in front of the hounds. The distance is dependent on the breed and
- ✓ speed of the hounds.
- ✓ Make sure the finish area is safe.
- ✓ Pay attention to the huntmaster and judges.

DON'T:

- Don't bury hounds in the corners.
- Don't allow hounds to become unsighted, if possible.
- Don't take chances with safety.
- Don't continue to run the lure if the huntmaster or judge(s) asks you to stop it.
- Don't continue running the lure if a hound becomes entangled in the string.
- Don't run the hounds into the pulley / equipment at the conclusion of the course.

IV. BREED RUNNING STYLES & LURE OPERATION

Thank you to Caryn S. Nelson, Russ Jacobs, Denise Como, Laurie Soutar, Peter Parker, Karen Frederick, Marilyn Smith, Janie Hale, Annie Chamberlain, Jack Helder, Ellen Bonacarti, Linda Garwacki, Deb Kidwell, Teri Dickenson, Rick Brown, Jack Downing, Tom Golcher, Denny Baker, and Dominique Crapon de Caprona for sharing their knowledge regarding the different sighthound breeds.



AFGHAN HOUND

Afghan Hound

Caryn S. Nelson

The Afghan Hound is the all-terrain vehicle of sighthounds, hunting by sight with the ability to execute powerful leaps, run swiftly and turn readily, while combining speed with power. The object of the Afghan hound was to hunt quarry over very rough and mountainous ground. The native country is one of crags and ravines. Hunting took them over vastly changing terrain, in mountainous country, but they also had to have the ability to spring and kill at the end. In light of this, lure coursing is not a valid test of the Afghan Hound's inherent abilities for traversing greatly varying terrain and rarely tests endurance, as most trials are held on manicured, rather flat fields of moderate length.

In regard to lure operation, the concept of agility seems to be lost in the expectation that a hound execute unrealistic, contrived turns. A true display of agility by an Afghan Hound would be maneuvering rough terrain with ease, power and with flexibility to stay balanced while maintaining speeds high enough to be a match for the Caracul, Persian Lynx or the Abu Dashti, a small, very swift deer. Speed of this magnitude is rarely, if ever, seen in American Afghan Hounds today, so it does not present a concern to the lure operator as much it does with some of the other sighthounds.

The greatest concern when operating the lure for Afghan Hounds is the excessive amount of coat that is common in present day Afghan Hounds. It is not uncommon for the coat to get tangled in the line as they move close to it or across it.

It is not uncommon for the Afghan Hound to be possessive of the lure. As quoted from Mr. Kamal from Afghanistan, in reference to hunting with Afghans in their native country: "Very pack oriented with fighting very often. This was especially when someone from another town, or another family within the town took their dogs hunting together. When they got together.... fights, until they started walking to the mountain, and then all fighting forgotten, just hunting." In other words, while the chase is on, the focus is on the prey/lure. While "fighting" is unacceptable in ASFA, this is not unnatural behavior for the prey-driven hound with an adrenaline build up. It may be in the best interest of all involved for the lure operator to keep the lure within a reasonable distance to maintain the interest of the Afghan Hounds on the course.

Afghan Hounds are comparatively easy to operate the lure for, with the greatest difficulty being to keep the coat from getting caught in the line and to maintain their interest by keeping the lure within a reasonable distance. Frequently Afghan Hounds will lose interest and take the shortest distance to ("cut") or perhaps simply reserve their energy if the prey/lure is not within a reasonable distance.



AZAWAKH

Azawakh

Deb Kidwell

The Azawakh running style is an upright gallop, similar to a Saluki, though their style is a bit more "leaping," like a deer or gazelle. Their speed ranges between that of a Pharaoh Hound and a Sloughi. Some individuals are faster than Sloughis.

Good running Azawakhs are very fast, agile and focused. Their cornering ability can be nothing short of amazing for a hound of their size. They usually follow the lure quite well and don't tend to spread out and cover the field. In general, the Azawakh has great enthusiasm for lure coursing.

In talking with lure operators who have previously run the lure for this breed, they commented that they have the speed and consistency of a course of good running Salukis and that they said that you don't have to worry about protecting them from themselves like Afghans, Whippets and Greyhounds. In all, they are an easy and enjoyable breed to run the lure for.



BASENJI

Basenji

Russ Jacobs

Basenjis are a moderately angulated sighthound, without the extreme adaptation for speed found in some of the other sighthounds. Their size and construction makes them very good over rough terrain, and their moderate angulation and slower speed makes them capable of great agility on very sharp turns. Although they are also capable of surprising bursts of speed, typically they will not run all-out for an entire course. Instead, they follow at a steady speed, using sprint speed when they see a chance to snatch the lure. They usually run on course plans designed for larger, faster and more fragile hounds and a good lure operator keeps all this in mind.

“Good lure operation” is relative to the breed running. Good lure operation for Greyhounds is disastrous for Basenjis, and vice-versa. Although good lure operation is relatively easy for Basenjis — they are not blindingly fast, so the lure operator has time to react to what is happening on the field and they are not easy to hurt. Too many lure operators do a bad job with them because they underestimate them. The key to good lure operation for Basenjis is keeping the lure close enough to them so that they don’t become unsighted, or cut to catch up. Being less extreme than the sighthounds built especially for speed, Basenjis corner better and require less time to adjust to corners, or they should require less time. Hence, there is no need to take the lure through the corners 45 yards ahead of them. In addition, they are short enough that it is easy for them to become unsighted if the lure gets over a slight rise, or if the grass is too high.

With Basenjis, as with many other breeds, the lure operator has a great deal to do with a good or bad course. The more the dogs are challenged, the better they will perform. Keeping the lure 30 yards out ahead of a Basenji is not likely to challenge him, or to elicit a good performance from him. The most common error that lure operators make with Basenjis is this one—they keep it much too far out ahead of them. When I tell a lure operator that he or she needs to keep the lure close to Basenjis, I am almost always told that “everybody knows that”. But unfortunately, I still see the lure much too far out ahead of Basenjis, over and over again. Although it is easier to keep the lure well out ahead of Basenjis since little judgement, attention or skill is then required, it makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the dogs to do well.

However, it is true that Basenjis are capable of bursts of speed, and can catch a lure operator who is keeping the lure close enough to interest them. A good lure operator has the judgment to keep the lure close enough, and the attention and reflexes to make sure that a dog displaying a burst of speed or cutting a corner doesn’t catch the lure. Work for balance. Keep the lure relatively close to the Basenji, but be prepared to smoothly pull it out a bit further if a dog cuts effectively, or turns on the speed. If the operator is attentive and prepared, and the equipment is adequate, the relatively slow Basenji shouldn’t be able to catch the lure even when it is being kept fairly close to the pack.



BORZOI
(Russian Wolfhound)

Borzoi

Denise Como

Borzoi have a different running style than most other sighthounds on the lure coursing field. They don't run close, they tend to "fan out" on the field immediately after the "Tally-Ho!" Often you can see them thinking and making decisions. They are not "line followers" like Greyhounds and Whippets, who come from strong racing backgrounds and are bred and taught to follow the lure. A lure operator may need to consider keeping a longer lead on the lure while running Borzoi, to give himself time to make critical adjustments if the hounds make unforeseen directional changes.

Trying to keep tabs on three Borzoi that may be covering different parts of the course at the same time can be a nightmare for a lure operator, and should not be left to newbies or the faint-of-heart. Collisions between Borzoi on the field is an important factor to consider, as they are comparatively large, fast and powerful hounds. Trying to maintain the position of the lure to keep such hazards to a minimum takes a lure operator who understands the breed, and who has a sure hand combined with quick reflexes. An assistant (or huntmaster) standing near the lure operator to act as a "spotter" is very important to the lure operator while running Borzoi.

The spotter should be able to track Borzoi who have veered off from the lead dog of the trio and are out of the line of vision of the lure operator. The spotter can keep the lure operator informed of the movements of those dogs. That extra pair of eyes can make the difference between a smoothly run course or a disaster in the making.



Cirneco dell'Etna

Cirneco dell'Etna

Jack Downing

The Cirneco is a medium- to fast-running hound. Primarily bred to hunt on rough and rocky terrain, riverbanks, and forests, they are very athletic and agile runners. As long distance hounds, they are capable of hunting for extended periods. Cirnechi are not typically sprinters and perform better on smaller, more compact courses. A breed trait is to voice (bark) while hunting.

Adept Cirnechi coursers are agile, focused and very enthusiastic. They follow the lure well and generally do not become "cheaters". Cirnechi are very athletic; some can be seen running at fairly advanced ages. They are an easy and enjoyable breed for which to run the lure.



GREYHOUND

Greyhound

Laurie Soutar

Greyhounds can present some interesting challenges to the lure operator. While the lure operator's first responsibility must be the safety of the dogs, every effort should be made to give the dogs the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities for the judges. Greyhounds rarely 'fan out' behind the lure like Borzoi, neither do they tend to run together in a close group like Whippets. They are the fastest of the sighthounds, and run with so much power and desire, that certain aspects of lure operation become critical to the safe operation of the course.

It is very important that the lure be kept at least the minimum of 10 yards in front of the dogs. If the lure is kept the required 10 to 30 yards ahead of the dogs, you will notice that the dogs do not break stride at the corners - they have time to prepare themselves. This is important, as the dog's breathing is regulated and assisted by the action of the legs. Without sufficient lead into a steep corner, the dog will be forced to break stride, interrupting the breathing rhythm, and it will take the dog 4 or 5 complete strides to regain his speed and breathing. This puts him at a distinct disadvantage against the dogs that are behind him that do get sufficient lead going into the corner. Greyhounds also have the highest incidence of coursing injuries amongst the sighthounds, and the lure operator bears responsibility for some of these injuries. These dogs generally have so much desire, that when buried in a corner, or having the lure turn out from under them, will generally try to force the corner, which can result in shoulder, toe and pastern injuries. It is also important that the minimum 10 yard lead is maintained on the straights, as a Greyhound that is closer than 10 yards to the lure will attempt a take, and this places the dog at risk of falling and getting tangled in the line while it is still moving, or striking a pulley or hold down with his face. It will also generally cost the dog his lead as he checks his speed to make the attempt.

In order to not encourage and reward cheaters, the lure operator should not 'zap' the lure ahead to get in front of the cheating dog, but should run the lure for the dogs that are making an honest effort. Every effort should be made to get the cheating dog back on the lure. Slowing the lure slightly to shorten the lead can sometimes be enough to get cheaters to commit to the lure, as long as you can do so safely. Care should also be taken to insure that the lure comes to a stop well back from the equipment at the end of the course, as Greyhounds will sometimes 'catch' the lure and try to continue to run with it. Every effort should be made to slow the lure down naturally at the end of a course to allow the dogs time to check their speed and plan their stop. It may be necessary to increase the lead of the lure in the last stretch in order to give the lure operator sufficient time to end the course safely. When the lure is brought in at full speed, and then stopped suddenly by stepping on the line, the chances of the dogs colliding with each other, the handlers or the equipment is greatly increased. In order to reduce the chance of the hounds running into the equipment (or the ladder!) the lure machine should be offset at a right angle, about 20 feet from the lure's line of travel. This way, if a dog (or the lure) overruns the finish, there are no obstacles. An offset start/finish also offers the lure operator better perspective on the first and last straights.



IBIZAN HOUND

Ibizan Hound

Peter Parker

The AKC standard states the following concerning the gait of the Ibizan Hound. "A trot in suspension; elegant and graceful in manner. ... In speed the Ibizan is in the same class as other coursing breeds, and is without equal in agility and high jumping and broad jumping ability, being capable of springing to great heights from a stand still."

The FCI Standard No. 89- Ibizan Hound states the following on the breed's gait: "Nimble and bright....., gallop is very fast and gives the impression of great agility."

The practical application of these standards is that the Ibizan Hound is a good courser. They generally have extreme enthusiasm and are very vocal; however, they do run clean and would rather chase the lure and not each other. The breed typically follows very well; however, the Field Champions tend to hedge the corners like other experienced hounds. The Ibizan Hound can usually corner with excellent agility, but the fastest hounds will give up some agility to gain that speed. They are generally faster than the Pharaoh Hounds and Rhodesian Ridgebacks. The Ibizan Hound is sometimes as fast as a Saluki or Borzoi; however, this is the exception rather than the rule. The Saluki and Borzoi should outrun the Ibizan Hound on a 200 yard straightaway.

The Ibizan Hound's endurance will be demonstrated by being able to run consecutive courses with minimal fatigue and continued enthusiasm.



IRISH WOLFHOUND

Irish Wolfhound

Karen Frederick

Irish Wolfhounds were originally bred to balance speed with strength. Their intended prey was not particularly fast but reportedly had the endurance to outlast most of its predators. Wolfhounds had to be able to catch up with a wolf as well as have the strength to kill it at the finish. It's reported that a wolf can run at 28 mph for the first 200 yards and can sustain 22 to 24 mph for a mile or two. After that, his speed would be reduced to about 12 mph. It took a fine balance of speed, endurance, and strength for an Irish Wolfhound to be successful in his original setting.

Being the largest of all sighthound breeds, the length of a Wolfhound's stride can be quite impressive at full speed. The slower rate of turnover can fool people into thinking that a large hound is slower than it actually is. A Wolfhound covers much more ground per stride than a smaller hound. The comparative speed becomes evident when good running Wolfhounds compete against the other sighthound breeds. Those breeds are faster, and should be, but Wolfhounds can often surprise spectators watching the mixed breed courses.

A smaller Irish Wolfhound may not necessarily be a faster one. A larger, well-constructed male can have better speed but will probably sacrifice some agility. A conformationally balanced hound will be able to generate speed most effectively. A Wolfhound should be able to cover ground smoothly, easily and efficiently and they will be the ones that surprise lure operators. Realize that larger frames and more mass will need increased time to complete the difficult turns in coursing. It also means that it takes a little longer for a Wolfhound to get to full speed and a lure operator shouldn't need much lead out of the lure initially.

Irish Wolfhounds that love lure coursing are usually smart enough to figure out the game. It normally does not take long for a Wolfhound to start anticipating and guessing where the lure is going. Generally, they are not a breed that runs directly behind the lure but will run better if the lure is kept within the ten to fifteen yard range in front of them on the straights with an extra ten yards given before turns, especially tight ones or downhill turns.

You won't be able to predict the speed of a Wolfhound on the coursing field. Conformation and current physical condition will influence a Wolfhound's performance. They are not self-exercisers at home and can fall out of peak condition quickly. They also don't generally have the drive of a Greyhound or Whippet. They will not typically run themselves to injury. They will not overdo and will pace themselves behind the lure.

As a lure operator, you may see a large variation in how well Irish Wolfhounds run. They can show some speed as long as their owners make the effort to get them into good physical condition for competition.



ITALIAN GREYHOUND

Italian Greyhound

Teri Dickinson / Rick Brown / Denny Baker

The origins of the IG are hidden in the mists of time. There is some debate (even among IG fanciers) about whether they were bred specifically to hunt, only as companions or both. Regardless of that debate, the fact of the matter is that in the here and now, they are allowed to course, and many of them want to. In fact some of them want to very, very badly, to the point of a Whippet-like fanaticism.

IG's have been coursing in ASFA since 1996 and we have learned many things about running IG's. First, their physical abilities are not in question. The only injuries we know of have been to the lure operator's pride when the little *\$#\$^s catch the lure. IG's are tough little dogs. They crash and burn just like whippets and come up running.

Mentally, IG's seem to fall into one of two categories. Some are maniacs, who would chase the bunny to their deaths. Many of these dogs are naturals and show great excitement the first time they see another dog course. Other IG's show good initial chase instinct, but seem unwilling to run an entire course. Good lure operation can help encourage these runners to stay with the lure.

The first big surprise for "new to IG" lure operators is how fast they are off the line. Remember those now immortal words of Rick Brown, "those little peckers are fast." Many a lure has been taken 20-30 yards from the line when the lure operator underestimated the sprinting capabilities of these tiny coursers.

The second thing the lure operator must remember is that these dogs have a limited line of sight compared to the taller hounds. Most IG's don't seem to jump up looking for the lure when unsighted, and the lure operator must be careful to strike a balance between keeping the bunny far enough ahead, but close enough so the dogs can see it over small terrain changes. IG's corner well (as might be expected), and do not need to be led out as much as a Wolfhound or a Borzoi might. Fast for their size, they are relatively slow compared to the other breeds and are not pushing nearly as much mass around the course, so the end result is that they are amazingly agile.

On the whole, IG's don't exhibit a strong tendency to cheat. As stated previously, they will generally stay right on the bunny for the whole course, or may tend to peel off at the first or second turn, or after running 200 or so yards. If a dog does seem to want to quit, as much as is practical, the lure operator should try to slow the bunny and bring that dog back in.

Training young IG's should be the same as any sighthound, except that smaller lures should be used. How would you like to be trained using a lure bigger than you are? IG's should be teased a lot with the lure, lots of herky-jerky to encourage them to pounce and kill. Use of a reversible motor to run the lure out a short way and then bring it back is great for encouraging enthusiasm in young dogs.

Diane Hill coined the phrase "the diminutive devils" in reference to the IG's and that's a pretty good summation of the way they course!



PHARAOH HOUND

Pharaoh Hound

Marilyn M. Smith / Janie Hale

While not as fast as Whippets or Greyhounds, agility, keenness, endurance and determination describe the Pharaoh Hound's ability for coursing. Their persistence is only exceeded by their enthusiasm. Pharaoh Hounds can be a lure operator's nightmare. On the go out or the first straightaway, Pharaohs often work the lure with each other. The faster dog may over run the first turn allowing the slower dog to gain the advantage as the lure goes around the course. Many times the lure operator takes the lure away from the front, cutting dog, afraid that it will be caught. This should not be done as Pharaoh Hounds run for the catching of the lure not just the chasing. Yes, Pharaoh Hounds do get creative and sometimes seem to rewrite the rules and course plans but they must be commended for their great pleasure of catching the lure at the end of the course.

Because many course plans are only a few hundred yards some Pharaoh Hounds get frustrated when the run is over so quickly. Good lure operators will keep the lure in front but not so far away that the trailing Pharaoh Hound gets lost at the next turn. The lure operator's job is a difficult one as well as a very important one. Lure operators must always be alert for the safety of the running hounds.

- M. M. Smith

While there is controversy whether the Phoenicians transported the dogs to Malta where they were preserved or whether Malta is where the breed originated, today as in ancient times, farmers still use them for rabbit hunting. In Malta the Pharaoh Hound is known as the "the dog of the rabbits." They continue to be treasured and protected by the people of Malta who have designated them as Malta's national hound. Lure operators can come to understand the running style a bit better through learning how they are currently being used for rabbit hunting on the extremely rocky terrain of Malta. The hounds are run in pairs called "mizzewgin" where they work as a team. It is through the use of the dogs very keen sense of smell and eyesight that Pharaohs locate rabbits in rocky terrain. Maltese rabbits do not dig burrows, they hide under rocks. To encourage the rabbits to leave the safety of the rocks, the handler may release a ferret that crawls between the rocks to flush them out. It is the Pharaoh's unique foot that allows them to grasp the rocks and negotiate the rough terrain safely as they chase the rabbit. A quote from Peter Gatt's *Kelb Tal-Fenek* states: "People who have seen the terrain on which they hunt are quick to comment that other sighthounds would break their legs if they would travel at such speed on this type of ground." It has been said by some that the Pharaoh's foot almost functions like a hand. I can attest to that after watching my Pharaohs in action!

Yes, Pharaohs are very vocal. Many people not familiar with the breed do not understand the importance of their bark. In Malta they generally hunt at night because that's when the rabbits come out to eat and the temperature is cooler. The handler turns the dogs loose and then waits and listens. In a real hunting scenario, it is through the bark that the handler knows the location of the hounds, if they have located a rabbit and are in hot pursuit, or if the rabbit has found cover in the rocks. The Maltese name given to describe the unique high pitched "I have found it bark" is "kurriera." So when you hear the Pharaohs barking you'll understand they're doing what they are supposed to do!

As with some of the other sighthounds, lure operators can expect Pharaoh Hounds to hunt the lure rather than just chase it. They are bred to use their intelligence, sense of smell as well as their keen sight when hunting. Of course, then there will be times that you'll just shake your head and think, what are they doing?

- J. Hale



RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

Rhodesian Ridgeback

Annie Chamberlain

The first corner is critical. If young, inexperienced dogs are not led through the first turn they encounter, this often leads to a dog that won't course, ever. So that first practice turn is critical. It needs to be a big, wide turn, not a ninety-degree turn.

Fat, out of condition Ridgebacks tend to lope along behind the bag. They never do anything more than that. Most lure operators only see fat, out-of-condition RR's.

The good dogs that are fast, agile, and in condition are a lure operator's nightmare. Because the dogs hunt in trios, one dog will chase, while the other two flank. During the course, the chaser becomes a flanker and vice versa, several times over. This optimizes the chances of catching the "game" but makes running the lure very difficult. Sometimes one dog will run to the high ground, jump up and down waiting for the chance to get the lure, then take off at a dangerous angle to the dogs running the lure.

RR's are also better at waylaying the lure than any other breed. Sometimes they lie on the line and wait, or they range up along the lure and just when you think it impossible, with one quick turn of the head, they have the lure. You almost never see the head turn, they are so fast.

RR's are noted for their sit spins to change direction. Rather than run out and turn in a circle, they sit down on their haunches and then lift themselves into the air going in the other direction. This can be very disconcerting to the lure operator, especially if the dog doing this is one of the cutting dogs.

RR's are a challenge because you have to know where all three dogs are at once, and they are seldom in the same place. Running inexperienced dogs with experienced dogs is probably the most dangerous situation. You have the inexperienced dog chasing along behind the bag, while the other two are ranging all over the field. RR's usually are somewhere in the vicinity of the lure, but their concept of follow does not include running behind the bag. Dangerous collisions can occur if the lure operator is not very careful.



SALUKI

Saluki

Jack Helder

Running the lure for Salukis is similar to running the lure for Greyhounds or Whippets, in that these three breeds have in common the ability to sustain continuous high speeds for the duration of a course. In fact, Salukis in good condition often get faster as the course develops. After all, they were bred to run miles, not yards. Given the frequency with which the fastest Salukis tend to be buried in turns, however, it seems as if some lure operators think Salukis are significantly slower than Greyhounds. In fact, Salukis in general are only a bit slower than Greys and a fast Saluki can keep up with many Greys. Salukis also should have far more agility than most Greys, and Salukis tend to have a good awareness of where other Salukis in their course are located, which reduces the risk of collision. However, Salukis are less likely to run in tight formation like well-matched Greyhounds and Whippets. A few Salukis even have a tendency to “work” the lure like Borzoi or RRs and can “trap” a lure operator. As to risks: a Saluki’s agility can wind it around a string very quickly if it catches the lure, and Salukis with feathering can become entangled in string almost as quickly as Afghans, so LOs and Huntmasters need to stay on their toes. Salukis who run with complete extension (front and rear) and their head low tend to cover lots of ground quickly, while head-up runners are generally a bit slower. However, many Salukis have an extra burst and can surprise a LO who doesn’t maintain concentration.



Scottish Deerhounds

Scottish Deerhound

Ellen Bonacarti

“A Deerhound should resemble a rough-coated Greyhound of larger size and bone.”

This description from the Scottish Deerhound breed standard should be kept in mind by anyone who is running the lure for Deerhounds. Deerhound owners frequently complain that lure operators underestimate the speed of their dogs and experienced lure operators will tell you that it's very easy to do exactly that.

Deerhounds are deceptively fast. Tall and long-legged, they may give the impression that they are going much slower than they really are. A Deerhound may not have the explosive speed off the line of a Greyhound or Whippet, but when he gets up to speed on a straightaway, he is really flying. It is important to get the lure well out in front when running it for a Deerhound. Their size and weight means they can't decelerate and corner like a smaller, lighter dog; they need plenty of lead through the turns. A Deerhound who gets buried in a corner is not going to recover as quickly as a smaller dog. Deerhounds are quite agile but they shouldn't be expected to demonstrate that agility by attempting to make turns with the lure under their noses. Deerhounds aren't as forgiving of lure operator error as some breeds. All too often, after being buried in a corner one time too many, a Deerhound will learn to hold back in anticipation of a turn, or learn to make wide looping turns instead of digging in. Keep in mind another sentence from the Deerhound standard: “Deerhounds do not stoop to their work like the Greyhounds”. A couple of bad spills attempting takes can turn a Deerhound off to lure coursing entirely. So give him plenty of lead into turns and time to make the turn and get back up to speed.

At the end of the course, slow the lure gradually and don't bring it in too far. Some Deerhounds are notorious for having “no brakes” and frequently end up dodging the lure equipment and lure operator's ladder if they aren't given sufficient space to come to a stop. Others like to make diving, sliding take attempts which can result in injury if done at full speed.



Silken Windhound

Silken Windhound

Tom Golcher

Silken Windhounds fall into one of two categories. Some are very lure intense, who would chase anything that moves. Others show good initial chase instinct, but seem unwilling to run an entire course. Good attention in lure operation is a must to help encourage these runners to stay with the lure an entire course.

Silken Windhounds, like whippets, rarely interfere with other hounds in a course and can be very fast off of the start line and can show quick bursts of speed throughout a course. Do not underestimate the sprinting capabilities of these coursers.

With the exception of those that seem to lose interest after the first couple hundred yards or so the size and running style can be compared closely to the whippet. The lure operator must be careful to strike a balance between keeping the lure far enough ahead, but close enough so the dogs can see it over small terrain changes. Silken Windhounds corner well and do not need to be led out as much as a Wolfhound or a Borzoi. They are fast for their size and are not pushing nearly as much mass around the course, so the end result is that they are amazingly agile.

On the whole, Silken Windhounds do not exhibit a strong tendency to cheat. As stated previously, they will either stay on the lure for the whole course, or may tend to peel off at the first or second turn and stalk the lure instead of give chase. When a Silken Windhound seems to want to quit, as much as is practical, the lure operator should try decrease the distance from lure to hound, giving him the feeling that he is catching the prey. I find this will, often times, keep the hound interested.

Training young Silken Windhounds should be the same as many sighthound and should be teased a lot with the lure as soon as practical and encouraged to chase and catch the lure. Youngsters should always “Win” and end with a positive experience if at all possible. I do not recommend the use of a reversible motor to run the lure out a short way and then bring it back. This teaches the young sighthounds very quickly that if he stops the lure will come back to him.



SLOUGHI

Sloughi

Dominique Cragon de Caprona, PhD.

The Sloughi, sighthound of the North African Berber people, is by definition a long distance runner. The breed runs at about 32-34 miles an hour, and although not quite as fast as the Greyhound, it has much more endurance. Unless the dogs are running under very hot weather, it is rare to see a Sloughi spent at the end of a course.

The Sloughi's racing style is the typical Sighthound gallop with extended and double suspension phases, as well as very powerful and lithe leaps. Because of its square proportions, the Sloughi cannot bend its back and neck as much as the longer bodied Greyhound, but it typically takes better turns. Although the speed of the Sloughi and the Saluki are about the same on the oval tracks in Europe, the Sloughi has a tighter racing style.

The male Sloughi, often quite larger than the bitch, is often very fast on the straight, but tends to be more carried away in the tight turns by its weight. The bitch, in contrast, can turn on a dime, if not quite as powerful as the males.

When operating the lure for Sloughis, expect a fast dog on the straight and an agile dog in the turns. Sometimes Sloughis hunt the lure, changing the lead place as they do so, instead of just chasing it, which makes it more difficult to adjust the speed of the lure to a specific lead dog.



WHIPPET

Whippet

Linda Garwacki

The Whippet is really the ultimate sprint speed specialist. Though more agile than your average Greyhound, some of the same considerations need to be given in pulling the lure for a fast Whippet. Because of a Whippet's Instant 0-35 mph capability out of the slip, the lure needs to be given plenty of distance between the dogs and the first turn in order to get the lead dog through the first turn without sending him/her into the next county.

Confusion can come from the wide variation in Whippet speeds. This may be more evident in this breed than most of the other Sighthounds. But overall, for their size, the Whippet will show you more speed and agility in a course than all others. But speed is what the breed is all about. There should never be a doubt about that.