

The Junior Messenger Dog

The Junior Messenger Dog (JMD) is the level after the Future Messenger Dog (FMD) and the level before actual Messenger Dog Trials that would take place in an open field.

You don't need an FMD to enter the JMD. Your dog does need to exhibit self-control and must be under your control at all times.

The FMD elements are suited to well-mannered Belgians with basic training (sit, stay, recall, etc.) The JMD elements are more demanding. The Basic Control Exercise will use the same rally type course used for the FMD; but for the JMD, the dog must be off lead for this and for the Stay Exercise.

The JMD evaluation consists of two parts. Part One includes the Basic Control Exercise and a one minute Stay Exercise. Part Two consists of three Messenger Runs with two legs per Run.

Part One

Basic Control

The purpose of the Basic Control Exercise is to demonstrate that the handler understands and respects the dog, and that the dog respects and will obey the handler.

Dogs walk with the handler off lead. Dogs being tested must wear a buckle, plastic snap or slip collar. A 6 ft leash is to be used for the Honor Exercise only. The team will walk a pattern designed by the evaluator; using signs similar to those used in Rally Obedience, or alternately, with commands called out by the evaluator or

helper. The pattern will be the same for all teams, and must use the following signs or commands: START, FINISH, one ABOUT TURN (LEFT or RIGHT), two changes of pace (a SLOW or a FAST followed by a NORMAL), one HALT and at least one TURN (RIGHT or LEFT).

The dog may walk on either side of the handler, but may not interfere with the handler's movement. The dog's position should leave no doubt that the dog is attentive to the handler and is responding to the handler's movements and changes of direction. The dog need not be perfectly aligned with the handler and need not sit when the handler stops, but may sit if desired. The precision of competition Obedience or Rally is not required, but is allowed if the handler wishes.

The handler may not physically guide or touch the dog, but may talk to the dog and encourage him or her in a happy tone of voice or modest hand motions such as clapping, patting the leg, etc... No loud or rough commands or motions will be allowed. This must be a positive experience for all.

Stay

After a team completes the Basic Control Exercise, they will remain in the ring for the Stay Exercise. The sign for the Stay will be approx. 10-15 feet from the stewards table and the dog's lead will be placed on the table. If there is no table, the evaluator will hold the lead at a marked distance away.

Only one team and the evaluator are in the ring for this exercise. The handler will ask the dog to stay in either a sit or down and once the dog is in position, the handler will step about 6-8 feet from the dog while the Stay is timed. The dog must remain in the chosen position for one minute while the evaluator times the exercise.

After one minute, the handler will walk to the steward's table or evaluator, collect the leash and return to the dog. The evaluator will tell the handler "exercise finished" after the leash is placed on the dog.

For the JMD, the evaluator is only scoring whether the dog stays for one minute as originally directed. No formal style of sit or down is required. No formal manner of returning to the dog is required. The handler may encourage the dog and multiple commands/signal to stay may be used. However, a cue/command or signal would not include "chattering" or holding the hand up to keep the dog in place. Continuous talking or using loud or harsh commands may result in failure.

Part Two

Messenger Runs

Message Runs are the main focus of the JMD. Familiarize your dogs to wearing collars or vests that hold a message. No specific style of collar or vest is required; just keep your dog safe. After each leg the handlers will change the message in the collar or vest.

You will need two handlers per dog. If only one handler can be at the evaluation, the evaluator may take the roll of the second handler.

During the Message Runs, handlers may only 'send' the dog, and not 'call' the dog. Commands such as 'report', 'find' etc. may be repeated and mixed within reason. Names of handlers and dogs may be used. For example 'report to Jack...go Sport' is allowed.

You may wish to use a different cue than you use for obedience or agility 'sends'. One old book on training Messenger Dogs used the word 'Report' to send the dog. Not something you're

likely to use for anything else! Or use 'Allez!', French for 'Go!' Be creative and have fun.

The distance for the runs will be no greater than 50 yards. More often it will be less due to constraints of designating available safe terrain. For example, it may be performed in an empty agility or obedience ring. The dog must sit or stand calmly at each handler while the message is taken and a new one added. The dog must wait until sent. Runs are not timed. Handlers determine the time their dog needs to refocus on the next run. Dogs should be under the handlers' control at all times.

The Basic Message Run consists of two legs. Handler A sends the dog to Handler B; that is one leg. Handler B sends the dog back to Handler A; that is the second leg and completes the Run. There will be three Runs (six legs) in the evaluation, one of which must be the simple Basic Message Run.

In addition to the Basic Message Run, the following are Runs and their elements that will make up the other two Runs (4 legs):

1) Dispatch Carry. Dog carries an item by mouth that contains a message for two legs of a Run. This item could be an old checkbook cover, coin purse, small notebook (not wire bound), makeup bag or similar. It must meet evaluator approval. This item must be free of anything that could be swallowed or considered a choke item.

2) Unusual Ground. The dog must navigate unusual ground for the two legs of this Run. This could include available local groundcover changes such as lawn changing to sand or a pond. This could be a plastic tarp between the two handlers. The dog may choose whether to go across the obstacle/cover change or go around it. Either choice is acceptable. The dog should not refuse to be sent because of cover change.

3) Hidden Handler. This Run will have four legs with two of the legs being the Basic Message

Run. After releasing the dog for leg one, the sending handler quietly moves behind an object a few feet away to hide. On leg two, the return to this handler, the dog will need to seek out the handler. After finding this handler, the dog follows the handler back to the original handler start place and completes two more legs of Basic Message Run between the two handlers.

A sunshade (with seated handler) or other suitable hiding object, such as the screens for out of sight stays used in obedience, may be utilized. The committee does not advise the use of a protection sports style of blind as it is likely to encourage the dogs who are trained in that discipline to bark.

General Information

Treats & Water

Dogs should not be lured by treats during the test or rewarded with them after each exercise. The handlers may provide water for the dogs and the dogs may have water in between all of the exercises, including in between the legs of the Messenger Runs.

Title & Certificate

The Junior Messenger Dog (JMD) certificate is given by the Belgian Sheepdog Club of America (BSCA) to the dogs who pass all the components of the JMD Evaluation. The JMD is a BSCA designation and not an AKC title.

The Future Messenger Dog and the Junior Messenger Dog evaluations are done in a smaller area and under more control in order to prepare the dogs and handlers for open field work in the higher levels of Messenger Dog Trials.

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Explanation Of Exercises and Evaluation Objectives



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