

## **Results of PAFTA TD test held Sunday, March 13, 2011**

After all the recent postings of ticks and their insidious tick born diseases, I've been doing my own battle with the nasty little creatures on my dogs, on me, in my house, and car after the PAFTA TD test – having to call in the exterminator to eradicate what we brought home with us. All while still trying to get over this lung bug I contracted over a month ago. Here's my write-up of last week's test. Enjoy!

I had a really fun time judging for my club, Palo Alto Foothills Tracking Association, Inc. at their 21<sup>st</sup> TD test. My co-judge was my tracking buddy, fellow sheltie enthusiast, and club member Alicia Keegan, DVM. The site was the familiar Santa Clara County Coyote Creek Parkway Trailhead in Morgan Hill, CA and so many of our members came out to help put on the test and support the entrants. The club offered 6 TD tracks plus an alternate. After the dust settled with prior passes and withdrawals ranging from a whelping bitch entrant to a family emergency out of state, there were 8 entrants from an initial 13. We had great weather both days and we had 6 passes!

Part of the Anderson Lake-Coyote Creek Parkway, this natural setting with multiple use trails was once home to the Ohlone Indians and part of the Rancho De Laguna Seca Spanish land grant. Although surrounded by cattle grazing on the hillsides, busy Highway 101, monster house development, and a retail complex anchored with Target and PetSmart, there were signs of wildlife (wild turkeys, quail, wild pigs, coyote, dormant rattlesnakes) among the grass fields, abandoned orchards, and dilapidated barns.

California has been blessed with an abundance of rain for our very short tracking season. Unfortunately, this year we had to abandon 3 fields I used last year. A few days before the test, Alicia and I walked the property to see how bad the thistles had invaded some of our fields. We were disappointed that no matter where you went, milk weed and star thistles were prevalent throughout the property. Very different from last year. Fortunately, we had another property west of Highway 101 with some very nice fields there. This area is mostly used for our TDX tracks, but we were able to avoid the obstacles and changes of cover to plot 2 very nice, fun TD tracks. All tracks had ankle high field grass.

Plot day went very smooth as Alicia and I had previously agreed on what fields to use, how we would move from field to field, entry/exit of our tracklayers, and what shape of track to plot in each field. Walking the property previously was a tremendous help to us both, even though I am very familiar with the site. It can be so disappointing to get half way through plotting a track, only to find you can't continue because of these nasty, hidden thistles. We had warm, spring like weather, a lovely breakfast provided by Mary Ann Graziano and a great lunch spread (by our TS John), including sushi – what a treat for me - love that stuff!

What a pleasure to work with Test Secretary John Galloway! He was so thorough in everything he did – from taking care of all the secretary duties, to providing plot day lunch, and coordinating all the other volunteer duties. John is a new member and stepped up to be TS without hesitation. Thank you, John! Chief Tracklayer Jan Murphy was invaluable to us judges; not only did she hire

the BEST tracklayers from the club for us, she also strategically walked up and back on the bike and access paths so we knew where the field ended or the exit route was from a prior track – very helpful! She also closely monitored how much time we spent walking to each test track and the time spent judging each dog to expertly adjust the tracklayers’ start times for each successive track on test day. There is a bit of a drive and then a walk-in to the west property, and that’s after the walk-back from the far fields at HQs. Great job, Jan!

Back to my house with Alicia, who I hosted over night. We thought we had done a complete and thorough tick check, but that turned out not to be the case – nasty little buggers! A nice hot meal and map session, early to bed, as it was to be Daylight Saving Time change for Sunday, missing 1 hour of much needed sleep.



Test day dawned cool and overcast, with a slight breeze for 6 of the 7 tracks (no wind on alternate). Because Alicia and I had found too many ticks on us from plot day, and on us and our dogs earlier in the week when we did our walk about, I gave a little tick removal seminar prior to the draw. Armed with tick spray, v-e-r-y long handled tick pullers (I want to stay as far away from the wee beasties as possible), my laminated card of “How to identify California Ticks” (thanks to Dr. Keegan for this handy little reference gem), and my “ick, ick, tick!” jar, I reviewed the proper removal/disposal technique with the entrants. On hand for any tick-i-ness, not only did we have my co-judge Dr. Keegan, but Kerri Shandro, DVM, a new club member applicant, who came to watch her first tracking test. The dogs were certainly in good hands if these disgusting parasites hitched a ride.

TS John Galloway did the honors of introductions and acknowledgements. Santa Clara County Park Ranger Sergeant Mike Bacon joined us for the morning ceremonies. He is head ranger of the park and has been a great help to our club in gaining access to the site. A few words of encouragement

and protocol from us judges, then the draw. The usual flurry of activity and we were off to the first track. Drivers Wendy Lee and Susan Kline made sure that a vehicle was available, especially for us judges!

Track 1 went to a Belgian Sheepdog, dog, who set the tone for the rest of the day. This dog just penciled his track, moving at a nice, steady, consistent pace. Congratulations to our oldest entrant, 11 yo Ch. Isengard's Journey to the Top, UDX, HSAS, MX, MXJ, NF, now TD and his very delighted owner (and club member) Margot McKereghan. Certified by Meg Azevedo, tracklayer Lynne Benson-Colbert.

Track 2 went to a very blonde Golden Retriever, dog, that I kept calling a lab – blame it on me being on a pharmacy full of scripts for a month – what an air head! Alicia and I were SOOOO glad that this newbie team circled at EACH corner, otherwise we never would have caught up with them! A breathless congratulations to Tigana Cairngorm Blessed Thistle, now TD and his proud handler/owners Donald McKee and Christine Hsu. Certified by Bob Rollins, tracklayer Denise Gilbert.

Track 3 went to a Basset Hound, bitch. This was our heartbreaker of the day. This cutie just about penciled her way through 4 legs/3 turns of the track, including a short patch of thistles that we just could not avoid. On the last turn (open to the right), the dog went off to the left, never to recover. We wish this team success in the future! Tracklayer (and club President) Kamrin McKnight.

A bit of a walk to the back part of the HQ property, passing up 3 of the fields we used last year for TDs, but could not this year because of the thistles – so disappointing.....

Track 4 went to a Belgian Tervuren, bitch. This was our youngest dog, just 7 months old. I passed her litter sister at the local Terv club TD test in February, so this handler has been very busy! This sweetie started off nicely, but half way down the first leg, she stopped and stood, ears up, alert, looking off to the right of the track. The handler thought she was distracted by a pile of abandoned equipment off to the side of the field. He was sure she thought there were trolls hiding in the nooks and crannies. But Alicia and I have a different take. We heard the distinct chatter of a ground squirrel, warning her that she better not come any closer! What must have seemed like an eternity to wait her out and encourage her to “find your track!”, this puppy completed the remaining track with a couple of “oh, what's THIS!”, then back to business to that prized glove! Congratulations to Symons' Treasure Jakki, now TD and patient handler/owners (and club member) Dick Symons and wife Sue. Certified by Barbara Adcock, tracklayer Colton Meyer – who doubled as photographer!

Track 5 went to a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, dog. These folks traveled from New Jersey for our test, stopping in OR to buy some property on the way, and visiting their daughter locally! Talk about multitasking! This dog played to the crowd, making sure at several points along the way to check to see that the gallery was watching him. A few “let's check this out” deviations along the way to a strong finish to the end glove. Congratulations to Skylark Beachcombin' at Deerhill, CD, RN, now TD and his thrilled handler/owners Pat Etchells, John Etchells, and Laurie Geyer.

Certified by Richard Knapp, tracklayer Donna Highstreet. This young dog had the neatest toy! Back at HQ, he presented me with a plastic human foot squeaky toy, complete with painted toenails – how appropriate for a tracking dog; I got to find one of these for my dogs.

A bit of a walk back to HQ, where we did a tick check, prepared to move to the other property, and had a wonderful brunch prepared by Ann Begun. There was fresh fruit salad, brownies, peanut brittle, drinks, things I don't even remember. But the BEST breakfast casserole ever. I think I had 2 helpings – after all, I walked all that way, and I need to keep my strength up.... It was wonderful.

We all packed up our stuff and caravanned off to the west property. Once at the parking area, we had to walk in to the access to the next tracks. The bike path on this property is highly used by bicyclists and you have to be aware of their coming and going as you walk down the bike path (with or without a dog) or you could be run over.

Track 6 went to a Golden Retriever, dog, who did a little searching at the 1<sup>st</sup> corner which approached a eucalyptus grove. We plotted the track to skirt around these trees to the right and the dog did do a little checking on either side of each of the legs until we cleared the area. A bit of a slow down as he negotiated a brief patch of low thistle, a little deviation on the last leg, to a strong pull to the big, fat glove. Congratulations to Dalane a Perfectly Honest Soul, now TD and his happy owner Dianne Sipe. Certified by Mitzi Young, tracklayer Judy Knorr.

We were able to use the alternate track for titling. This track went to a German Shepherd, dog. This dog, too, had a track that skirted around another small grove of eucalyptus trees and he also did a bit of searching at the 1<sup>st</sup> corner. But put your running shoes on after that! He hauled his handler across the hill on the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg, and ran up the hill and over the crest with me trying to keep up after them. Once on the crest, I could see that they had made the next leg and corner– and there was no stopping them. Fortunately, I had plotted this track so that I could stand on the crest and see the remainder of the track from a nice vantage point! Now, THAT was using my congested head! Somewhere along the line, Alicia and the tracklayer joined me as we watched the rest of the track. This dog took 5 minutes, if that, to do this track. I MUST increase the speed and incline on my treadmill! Congratulations to Faelan Von Der Gauss, now TD and his breathless owner Dana Haggerty. Certified by Mitzi Young, tracklayer Linda Knowles.

Because of the picturesque location, we did photos at the site; some very nice group shots; thanks Colton Meyers. Off to a local restaurant where Alicia and I finished up our maps, a debrief on each track by us judges, and then a big party with entrants, workers, and gallery! I got a number of complements on how fun the tracks were and how nice and readable my maps were – that they were a great memento of the day's event.

What a wonderful day. I can't say enough about my great club and how so many members just step in and help. Barbara Adcock not only helped with the gallery, answering questions and keeping them in the proper areas when CTL Jan was otherwise occupied, but graciously reviewed my maps when asked. All our tracklayers were just perfect and the greatest people to work with. The drivers showed up magically. There was always food and water when ever I needed it. Although we didn't

see Terry Southard, her handy work prepared the premium list and the catalog – perfect behind the scenes execution. John Galloway and Jan Murphy made my job so easy. Thank you, all!

Thanks to Palo Alto Foothills Tracking Association, Inc. for another fun filled and successful weekend for our tracking community.

Again, I am spoiled!

Rita Crawford  
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