

## IRO Expert Talk

Second online Q&A session from 11.05.2021

### Experts

- Walter Hoffmann, IRO Judge Instructor
- Rolf Häusermann, IRO Lead Trainer
- Dušan Weber, IRO Lead Trainer

**My dog has a bigger problem with depth (from about 1 meter) and it gets even worse when it's then dark. He had an incident/accident as a puppy, at that time he fell into a deep dark hole. Now when he is told to go down into a dark hole, he bucks and starts barking like crazy so he is hard to calm down. Everything I have tried until today has failed.... it also does not work when I first get into the hole.... what else can I do? I would be very happy about any further tips.**

**Rolf Häusermann:** The only thing that helps is to create this situation as often as possible in training so that the dog does not have a negative experience many times and learns that the situation is bearable. That provides security for the dog. I would carry the dog into the dark / deep and let it work outwards from there.

**Dušan Weber:** Apparently the dog has already made same negative pattern. He needs to "break" these negative patterns with situations where the dog feels GOOD. I would focus primarily on his well-being in darker spaces and situations that have nothing to do with the search.

**Question: How do I teach the dog to be calm, when he still needs to work with high motivation (change of drive outside IGP)?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** With very work-motivated dogs, I try to exercise them a little before the start, i.e. I ride a bike or keep them busy with concentration work. A few exercises in pointing at objects are also excellent for this.

**Question: How can I teach my dog sending in the right direction - e.g., learn baseline up to 50 metres straight to the right and to the left.**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Bucket work is perfect for training directability.



**Dušan Weber:** Working on the base line is the foundation of good functional obedience. Learning the basic line must be taken with all seriousness. We must have a meadow, a path... an open space without obstacles where we can send the dog left and right without any problems. Always mark the middle and left, and the right side, which are in a straight line about 50m (70 steps) away from the middle.

**Question: How do you train helpers properly? Are there any documents and workshops ONLY for training helpers or similar?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Documents are not the right approach for this work. It depends on the situation, how the helper should react. IRO is planning to offer courses for helpers in the future, to prepare helpers properly.

**Question: How can I learn to stay orientated outdoors?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Learning to read the compass and maps, eventually with a GPS course.

**Dušan Weber:** It is best to attend an orientation course, where you will be introduced to the basic of topography, the use of maps in nature, orientation with help of a compass and the use of electronic devices used in orientation – GPS. It then takes quite a bit of practice in different environments and situations.

**Question: Who can teach me to use a radio device?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Fire fighters and civil protection often offer courses in countries. IRO may not do this worldwide, as there are some regional differences in each country.

**Question: How does the task force work?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Depends on your organisation. One cannot answer this in general, as it is different from NRO to NRO and from country to country.

**Dušan Weber:** It all depends on the event that happened. It does not matter whether a person got lost in nature or a single-family house or an entire block, several houses, an entire street collapsed.

In Slovenia, everything is the responsibility of the police, there is a plan to activate the forces that are needed given the size of the event. In most cases, a "command post" is established in which all heads of various services are police, civil protection, firefighters,



rescuers, dog handlers, engineers ..... Here the work of the entire rescue is planned, units are needed in the field, keep a chronology of events.... and many other things. We need to be aware that rescue dog guides are just one small part of the mosaic in rescue operations.

**Question: Is there a sequence when you arrive as a helper and or as a dog handler when a major disaster occurs? How do you know that - is there a document?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** It depends on the organisation who is in charge. Usually it is alarm, arriving, report, organizing.

**Question: Explanation of the hierarchies in the event of damage - who is above whom - who is the contact person for me?**

**Dušan Weber:** So you always come to the „meeting point“ from there you go to the place of event in an organization way. One of you is the leader. The leader is trying to find a LEADER – work sites. They are usually marked with special clothes (so is not difficult to find it). He tries to get information from him whether dogs are needed and where, or when. Your interlocutor is YOUR LEADER!!, and he is your partner for conversation with the leader, who oversees coordinating search and rescue dogs in the headquarters.

**Question: What training do I need to be allowed/able to participate? How can I train in a sporting way to stay on track?**

**Rolf Häusermann:** Sport and real mission are two different disciplines. The only thing that may be trained in sport for real missions are alerting and a strong will to find the victim.

**Question: Who decides at the WCH, e.g., in the area, whether you have to go through the middle or - adapted to the terrain - according to the tactics of the handler? This is how you also train tactics.**

**Walter Hoffmann:** The terrain at the WCH as of now is designed in a way that the dog handler must present the directability of the dog from the baseline. The tactics are then also limited to this. However, the IRO has not yet made this decision final, because it depends on the experiences and the response. This makes the World Championships much more attractive because spectators can observe the work due to the baseline. However, it must be ensured that the work of the search and rescue dog team is not disturbed.



**Question: Area searching. What happens when dog finds an accidental person in the search area? Is it a false alert? Is the time for searching getting longer?**

**Walter Hoffmann:** In this case it is a failure of the organization. Therefore, the dog handler and his dog are not allowed to be punished. In no way this is a false alert. Regarding the loss of time, the judge should consider additional search time.

**Question: Is it a mistake when dog drops a bringsel before coming to his handler, however takes it up again by itself and then finishes an alert? How will judges rate this behaviour?**

**Walter Hoffmann:** Depending on the situation, this is only a minor mistake, consequently a small point deduction takes place.

**Question: About RH-MT tests. Is it allowed to leave a trail layer on the end of trail? Especially at the V level? It is a big logistic problem to take layers from ends of trails and bring them back before start of a MT-teams. Particularly when there are, for example, 10 teams on the event.**

**Walter Hoffmann:** Yes, this is allowed.

**Question: Could you explain/describe what the exercise "motivation/food/toy circle" is about? We don't know this exercise or maybe we know but with another name.**

**Dušan Weber:**

**Level A:** The dog handler places himself in the middle of 3 - 4 people around him. This should take place on a meadow or place without any obstacles. The figurants move about 20 steps away from the dog handler and go into a sitting or crouching position. Now the dog handler lets go of the dog without any command! As soon as the dog shows interest in any of the figurants, the respective person lures the dog only a little. When the dog approaches the person, a confirmation follows immediately. A reward (food or toy) are given and the dog is led back to the dog handler by using the reward. Arriving there, the figurant decreases the effort and acts neutrally. Now everyone is waiting until the dog shows interest in another figurant and the procedure is repeated. Exercise is finished until all figurants stand with the dog handler. At the end the dog handler puts a lead on the dog and leads it away without any command.

**Level B:** Same as level as A, but now the dog is not lured by the figurants. Everyone waits quietly until the dog approaches a figurant on its own. As soon as the dog approaches a figurant, the dog gets a confirmation again and is led back to the dog handler by using



reward (food or toy). When the figurant approaches the dog handler, he stops using reward and stay neutrally behind the dog handler. At the end the dog handler puts a lead on the dog and leads it away without any command. The figurants are not allowed to leave until the dog is gone.

**Level C:** As soon as the dog approaches all figurants on its own and without hesitating, the distance between the figurants and the dog handler is extended gradually. This procedure is repeated until the figurants are 60 paces away from the dog handler. Extremely important dog handler is neutral (no command, no leading the dog in directions!!!!)

**Level D:** If this steps work, the dog should indicate the figurants in different positions (lying down, sitting, crouching) before it is led back to the dog handler by using reward. Other than nothing changes. If level D can be done several times without any mistakes, the figurants can take in their position before the dog handler and the dog arrive at the training place.

**Rolf Häusermann:** The circle could be done with dogs of all age. Please not, that some dogs, who are already working independently, will gain even more independence. We do not recommend the circle for those dogs.

**Question: I would like to ask for a method how you would recommend teaching the search of the ID article (the square) in RH-F tracking part.**

**Rolf Häusermann:** As with most exercises, I break them down. I first practise pointing at home or in a familiar environment. I start with the food bowl because the dog always must wait first when I put the food down until I give him a command to eat. I take advantage of this and wait until he concentrates on the food and combine it with commands such as "good show", a short pause "take it" or another release command. Then the dog can eat. Later I put the object on the floor and block it with a leash so that the dog can't touch it. Again, I give the command "show" when he concentrates on the object, then I dissolve it with a marker, and he gets a toy or food. IMPORTANT: Never reward with an object he is not allowed to touch. Later I put the object on the floor, leave the dog still secured to the counter sand, step slowly from behind to the dog so that his shoulders are between my legs and when he points nicely, I put a marker and drop a treat in front of his mouth. If that works, I take this behaviour into the field. Since I have assigned a command to pointing, I can easily incorporate this command later when I am doing ID object tracking. Like "Show area" (does not have to be this command), just use the same command every time.

**Question: Clarification required for this please; In the testing guidelines for odience for Level V test. Exercise #3 Down with Recall. On page 38 Section 4.1.4 states that 1 AC and/or VC is permitted for the "recall", however on page 25 Section 3.3.7 states that a AC or VC to recall is allowed. We would appreciate knowing which one it is as our team is trying very hard to make sure we get everything right.**

**Walter Hoffmann:** The question is not correct. The contradiction in the PO exists for the "down" of the dog with VC/AC. In the "Addendum to the IPO-R" this problem is resolved for all areas with the following reference:

Concerns all chapters:

Contradictions with voice commands and/or hand signals, or voice commands and hand signals: The following applies to all: "In principle, voice commands and/or hand signals are permitted in all exercises, unless something else is expressly required in an individual exercise and makes sense".

**Question: This next question is more about training on a personal note from me. I have been told many times to pick one reward for my dog and stick to it. Food or toy. My dog gets tired of the same thing all the time, so I believe in changing the reward for her. She does not always work hard for a toy on the rubble because it's difficult to play on the spot, so I use food on rubble which she works hard for. In area, a toy is favorable because she can play with the subject but one toy gets boring after a while so I will use a different one occasionally. I would appreciate opinions on this matter, do I stick to one reward or change the reward occasionally? I prefer to change the reward accordingly but wonder if this could cause any issues.**

**Dušan Weber:** I use the toy both on the rubble and in area search. I use food in obedience exercises. Of course, it is necessary to adapt to each one individually to get the best possible result. Maybe just to consider that we need to be especially careful on the rubble so that the food does not scatter around rubble! However, it is also likely to ask whether we have a game with a dog "done", if it gets tired soon enough, or if the victims are "inappropriate, they do not have enough knowledge to properly reward the dog with the game.

**Rolf Häusermann:** Some dogs like changing toys as a reward. Make sure to pick always the favourite toy for your dog.



**Question: For the transition from the IPO-R 2012 to the IPO-R 2019, there is a "transitional regulation 2018-2019" in the addendum to the IPO-R examinations, which states that if a positive A examination has been completed by 2018, one can start in B in 2019. Is this regulation only valid for 2019 or does it apply generally from 2019, e.g., if one could not start in B level in 2019/2020?**

**Walter Hoffmann:** This regulation only applies to the transition year!