

# Maltese in Dog Sports

A whole new world of dog sports has evolved in recent years. More and more Maltese are participating in this world of fun, bonding and enjoyable activities. Dog sports give the owners and dogs a variety of ways to engage in fun activities with their Maltese creating an even deeper bond with their dogs.

The AMA has witnessed this interest with the increase in Obedience and Rally entries. At the annual board meeting in 2010, the Board unanimously approved to offer Rally along with Obedience at the AMA National Specialty starting in 2011. Since Rally has been added, the entries in Obedience and Rally at the AMA National Specialties have risen dramatically to an all time high in 2014 of 30 entries compared to a previous average of 3-8 entries in Obedience alone.

The AMA has been very supportive of our Maltese in dog sports. We are proud of our versatile little dogs.



Chadwick – Obedience - High Jump

## What are these popular dog sports?

Obedience, Rally, Agility, Lure coursing, Barn Hunt, Trick Dog, Nose Work, Weight Pull and Freestyle are just to name a few! If you want to find something to do with your Maltese, there's something out there for you. There are many dog sport venues other than AKC.

The following is a brief description of some of the various dog sports.

### Adapted from AKC's: A Beginner's Guide to **Companion Events**

Companion events showcase the dog working with the handler in activities that might be performed in a regular house hold setting. The dogs and handlers train for each event and each level within that event for many months before they enter a test or competition and are evaluated on their mastery of the required skills.



Chadwick - Obedience - leather articles

**AKC Obedience** demonstrates the usefulness of the dog as a companion to man. Developed in the 1930's it is one of the AKC's oldest events. Obedience trials showcase dogs that have been trained and conditioned to behave well in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. At the Novice level the dogs must be able to heel on a

loose leash and off leash, come when called from a distance and stay in a sit and down with the handler at a distance. At the Open level the sits and down stays are done without the handler present, the dogs must do all heeling off leash and must be able to retrieve a dumbbell on the flat and over a jump. For the recall, the dogs must be able to stop forward motion and down and then come again when called. At the Utility level the dogs must do scent discrimination, run to a stationary spot across the ring and then take two jumps as directed by the handler. They must also be able to heel, sit, down and come with only hand signals.



Chadwick – Obedience – Broad jump



Clover – Rally

**AKC Rally** is a companion sport to AKC Obedience. Rally requires teamwork between dog and handler along with similar obedience performance skills.

The dog and handler team move at their own pace through a course includes 10 to 20 stations, depending on the level. Scoring is not as rigorous as traditional obedience. Communication from the handler to the dog is encouraged and perfect heel position is not required, but there should be a sense of teamwork and enthusiasm as they go through the course.



Chadwick - Rally



Clover – Rally jump



**Agility** is the fastest growing dog sport in the world. AKC offers its own series of levels and titles. Running a dog in an agility trial is the ultimate game for you and your dog and is one of the most exciting canine sports for spectators. In an agility trial, a dog demonstrates its agile nature and versatility by following cues from the

Top left: Gunner – Agility jump

Below: Sara- Agility teeter

handler through a timed obstacle course of jumps, tunnels, weave poles and other objects and without the handler touching the dog. It's an activity that strengthens the bond between dog and handler and provides fun and exercise for both. There are several types of classes offered at an agility trial: Standard, Jumpers with Weaves, Fifteen And Send Time (FAST) and Preferred level which includes all the classes listed but the dog jumps 4 inches lower than the Performance classes.



Adapted from AKC's: **Performance events**



### **Lure Coursing – Course Ability Test (CAT) – New to all breeds**

The AKC offers this program that the dogs and owners love so well, to test the dogs basic coursing instinct or hunting by sight ability.

The dogs chase an artificial lure, in an open field and are judged by two judges, on the dogs overall ability, speed, endurance, agility, and how well they follow the lure.

Lure coursing is an event for all Sighthounds. In 2013, AKC created a new event that allows *all dogs* to discover the

Lure Coursing- Tinker Lilly-only Maltese with a CA Title

excitement of lure coursing. The Coursing Ability Test (CAT) is for any dog of any breed, including mixed-breeds, as long as it is at least 1 year old and individually registered or listed with AKC.

To pass the test, a dog running alone must pursue a lure, completing the course with enthusiasm and without interruption within a given time.

Dogs that pass the CAT three times will earn a Coursing Ability (CA) title. Ten passes and a dog earns a Coursing Ability Advanced (CAA) title, and 25 passes results in a Coursing Ability Excellent (CAX) title.

The upside of this event is the dogs are kept in such good healthy shape, doing something that comes naturally and that they really like to do.

Adapted from Barn Hunt Association LLC: **Barn Hunt**



Tinker Lilly Barn Hunt- earned RATI, 1 leg towards AKC RATN

something to enjoy with no pressure on handler or dog. But these informal events were never a sanctioned sport. The Barn Hunt Association, LLC has created a sanctioned sport honoring the traditional role of dogs in ridding barns, homes, and properties of vermin. Barn Hunt opens this fun sport up to any dog, of any size, type, breed or mix that can fit through an 18" wide through approximately 22" high tunnel. In Barn Hunt, you can earn titles and placements at levels from Instinct through Master, and even Championships and beyond.

Barn Hunt is growing rapidly in popularity. Dogs must be registered with the BHA to enter sanctioned trials.

**Trick Dog:** Do More With Your Dog!® is the only official sanctioning and organizing body for the sport of Dog Tricks. It has become a very popular sport. Teaching tricks establishes a pattern of learning, teaches skills and focus, is a positive method of training, and promotes a bond between the dog and owner.

The Trick title allows the dog owner a choice of behaviors in each category enabling the owner to play to the strengths of his particular breed/dog. There are five title levels, Novice Trick Dog (NTD), Intermediate Trick Dog

Since February 19, 2013, AKC recognizes Barn Hunt on AKC pedigrees. Working in the Barn with straw and hay bales and a rat in one tube, one blank tube, one tube with litter. Dogs will be required to execute the tunnel made of hay bales at least once on the course, but can do the tunnel at any time.

For years, informal barn hunts were held in conjunction with earthdog events and terrier fun days, using various rules, and as



Chadwick- 1<sup>st</sup> Maltese Trick Dog Champion - TDCH

(ITD), Advanced Trick Dog (ATD), Expert Trick Dog (ETD), Trick Dog Champion Title (TDCH). Dog trainers tend to train the hardest when working toward a goal—it keeps them motivated, and focused. The owner is highly interactive with their dog teaching on command a certain behavior to earn a Trick Dog Title.

Adapted from UKC's: **Weight Pull**



Tinker Lilly - Weight Pull

Weight Pull Events give dogs an opportunity to perform a function that comes naturally to many dogs, one that they obviously enjoy. Dogs use a harness to pull a weighted cart a prescribed distance within one minute. The weight vehicles operate either on wheels, on snow or on a rail system. The dogs work toward earning titles based on how much weight they pull in proportion to their body weight so from the smallest to the largest, all dogs can compete. Never count out even the tiniest of dogs in this exciting competition!

Adapted from NACSW's: **Nose Work**

K9 Nose Work is the specific sport created and sanctioned by the National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW). This sport was inspired by the training methodology of detection K9s and borrows elements of that training for recreation. The terms nose work, fun nose work, scent work, search work are all commonly used references to describe any activity where the dog is using its nose to locate a target scent or odor. K9 Nose Work is the term that defines this detection inspired sport that has evolved from the pursuit of many dogs (with their handlers) to practice nose work and have fun. One of the many challenges faced by working K9s and their handlers is encountering new environments and scenarios daily. This challenge will be reflected in the sport through differing search environments and requirements of each trial location.

Adapted from Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc: **Freestyle**

Canine Freestyle is both a training method and a competitive event in the Sport of Dogs. As a competitive discipline, Canine Freestyle teams create their own tests called presentations. There are four levels of competitive presentations and the levels increase in difficulty relative to required technical elements. At a Freestyle Titling Event each team presents the test they have created. It is scored by two judges in the areas of training, performance, teamwork, music selection, and how the team's test creation fulfilled the rules supporting the definition of Freestyle. A Freestyle presentation clearly expresses the working relationship of a human and canine team by focusing on and enhancing the dog's best attributes. The test is always presented live before spectators which evaluates the ability of each team to maintain spectator involvement and to communicate the purpose and intent of our sport. The purpose of Canine Freestyle is to show the dog to his best advantage in a creative and artistic manner.

Some other venues for dog sports open to Maltese are listed below. You will have to check your area to see if they are offered. Some are regional and not offered in a lot of areas in the USA.

UKC: United Kennel Club (variety of dog sports)

ASCA: Australian Shepherd Kennel Club  
(Obedience, Rally and Agility)

CDSP: Companion Dog Sports Program  
(Obedience)

USDAA: United States Dog Agility Association  
(Agility)

NADAC: North American Dog Agility Council  
(Agility)

CPE: Canine Performance Events (Agility)

TDAA: Teacup Dogs Agility Association (Agility)

UKI: UK Agility International (Agility)

Now go out and have fun with your Maltese!

Joanie Carqueville







