

Country Rat Race: Competitors Handbook

Revised May 2025



**Oxford Dog Sports Incorporated &
All Breed International Dog Shows**

ABIDS

Oxford Dog Sports Incorporated / All Breed International Dog Shows (ABIDS) is the sole proprietor of Urban Rat Race & Country Rat Race. This includes, but is not limited to, classes, workshops and trials. All rights are reserved. To inquire about offering classes, workshops, and/or trials for Urban Rat Race and/or Country Rat Race, please contact dogsatoxford@gmail.com. Head to oxforddogsports.com for more information.

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Overview.....	2
Section 2 - General Rules.....	3
Section 3 - Levels of CRR.....	5
Section 4 - Titles and Distinctions.....	7
Section 5 - Glossary.....	8

Section 1 - Overview

1.1 History

Country Rat Race (CRR) was developed by All Breed International Dog Shows (ABIDS) in 2021 to provide a sport for all breeds of dogs who may enjoy a rat sport in a rural environment. The development of Urban Rat Race (URR) quickly followed in 2022 to provide a rat sport which could be enjoyed year-round, with the goal to replicate an urban city environment where rats may typically be located. Both CRR and URR are scent-based sports which are inspired by elements of Barn Hunt, Earth Dog, Trailing & Locating, as well as tracking.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of CRR is to demonstrate a canine’s ability to locate rats in a rural environment. It tests the dog's drive, combined with the ability to work effectively with their handler as a team.

1.3 The Rats

CRR prioritizes the safety of the rats used at the forefront of the sport. All rats are contained in secure bite-proof cages, which are then secured in a box, and/or contained in a safe location. Dogs are permitted to “work” the cages, however any dog that is overly rough (i.e. picking up the cage) will be given a fault, with further instances resulting in a disqualification. The care and well-being of the rats is prioritized, with the rats rotated so that they are not being worked for the entire duration of the trial.

Section 2 - General Rules

2.1 Competitors

- Competitors may touch/indicate objects to draw the dog's attention to areas, but may not lift up or otherwise move objects to help the dog search.
- Handlers may reward their dog on the trail after each find. However, they must be careful not to drop food or they will incur a fault.
- Handlers are not to discuss the details of a run with other handlers until after all dogs within that class and trial have completed their runs.
- Handlers are permitted to lift their dogs, if able to, to get closer to an elevated hide. An accessible path is required for heights above 2 ft for dogs to be able to access higher hides without needing to be lifted up.
- Handlers are permitted to ask for the elapsed or remaining time during their run. Warnings for the amount of time remaining may be provided by the judge as a courtesy.

2.2 Dogs

- Bitches in season may not compete.
- When possible, an inspector dog will run the course first to ensure that the course is fair, and that the hides are findable. The inspector dog will be an experienced dog assigned by the judge. However, occasionally, an inspector dog may not be available.
- Dogs are permitted and encouraged to work off lead. Handlers are encouraged to use 20-30 ft drag lines to allow dogs to work on the trail. Running a dog on a drag line will be considered as running on lead.

2.3 Entries

Country Rat Race events will be limited to 100 entries per day, or 200 entries per weekend if it is a 2-day event. Handlers are allowed to compete with different dogs at the same levels, however special limits have been put in place. Certain levels will have limits on the number of entries and dogs per handler as follows:

- **Scouts/Huntsman:** No limit.
- **Hunt Master:** 16 entries/trial, may run 2 dogs in the same level, and waitlist up to 1 additional dog.
- **Fieldmaster:** 8 entries/trial, may run 1 dog in the same level, and waitlist up to 2 additional dogs.
- **Game Marshall:** No limit.

For example, in the event that only 6 dogs register for Fieldmaster, if a handler has 2 dogs on the waitlist they will be permitted to run their dogs.

2.4 Procedures

Dog/handler teams (also referred to as “hunting partners”) are to locate contained rat(s) along a trail in a rural environment. The trails will be varied in length depending on the level, and may be in brush, field, forested area, etc.

- Hunting partners will receive a pass or fail. A pass indicates a qualifying score. They must not receive more than 2 faults in order to receive a qualifying score.
- Hunting partners are to remain within 30 ft of the trail (indicated with flags).
- A false den (any combination of an area with bedding, rat tea, and/or an area in which a rat was sitting previously) will be used as a distraction. **If a false den is used in a level, dogs are to find and check the false dens, are not to alert, and move on.**
- The trail will be scented using a combination of rat tea and a rat cage that has been gently towed along the ground.
- Coloured flags will be placed along a trail with spacing based on the level, referred to as “markers”. White markers are to indicate a rat is within the area, yellow markers are to indicate a false den is within the area, and all other marker colours are to indicate a trail pathway. There may be more than one colour used on a run to indicate trails that are branching off from a main trail.
- Trails will be refreshed after 10 teams have run.

2.5 Faults

Hunting partners can receive up to 2 faults in all levels. If more than 2 faults are incurred, handler teams will not qualify. However, at the discretion of the judge, may be able to continue on the trail to gain experience. Faults may include:

- A false alert on a den or any other area where a rat is not located.
- The dog is unable to move on from an area to resume their search within a reasonable length of time (up to 1 minute)
- Should a dog pick up a cage off the ground, they will incur a fault. Should it happen a second time, the dog will be disqualified.
- Dog goes off course (up to 30 ft) and remains off course for an extended period of time (up to 1 minute).
- A handler drops food on the trail.

2.6 Disqualifications

A judge may indicate that a dog/handler team did not qualify when completing their run. Reasons in which would disqualify a dog/handler team can include:

- Dog/handler teams who exceed the time of their run.
- More than 2 faults were incurred.
- Dogs who are overly rough with the cages/lifting cages off the ground if a previous instance has occurred during that run.

- Handlers who move/manipulate the area to make it easier for their dog to complete searches, such as lifting open boxes, moving items, etc.
- Handlers who overly question the judge, marker, hide official, or other individuals assisting with the event.

The judge's ruling is final and should not be challenged in any way.

Section 3 - Levels of CRR

There are 5 levels within Country Rat Race: Scouts, Huntsman, Hunt Master, Field Master, and Game Marshall. Cubs is an optional title only and is not considered an official level of Country Rat Race.

3.1 Cubs (CRR-C)

- ***Optional** - ONLY earned during classes, practice days, or try-it days.
- Dogs who qualify **once** will earn the Cubs title (CRR-C).

Rats: 1

Leash: On leash

Markers: Visible

Distractions: None

Length of the Trail: 100 ft

Hide Visibility: Visible

Time: 3 minutes

Turns on the Trail: 1

Height Limit: On the ground

3.2 Scouts (CRR-S)

- Scouts is the first official level of CRR.
- Dogs who qualify **twice** will earn the Scouts title (CRR-S).

Rats: 1

Leash: On leash

Markers: Visible

Distractions: None

Length of the Trail: 200-300 ft

Hide Visibility: May be hidden

Time: 5 minutes

Turns on the Trail: 1-3

Height Limit: On the ground

3.3 Huntsman (CRR-H/CRR-HX)

- Working off lead is encouraged starting in Huntsman to demonstrate the development of teamwork.
- Dogs who qualify **three** times will earn the Huntsman title (CRR-H), or Huntsman Excellent (CRR-HX) if they run off leash.
- The handler **must** stop 2 ft away from the hide once it is located by the dog, to demonstrate that the dog had not been led to it by the handler.

Rats: 2

Leash: Optional

Markers: Visible, but reduced

Distractions: 1

Length of the Trail: 300-500 ft

Hide Visibility: May be hidden

Time: 7 minutes

Turns on the Trail: Up to 5

Height Limit: May be elevated up to 2 ft

3.4 Hunt Master (CRR-HM/CRR-HMX)

- Dogs who qualify **three** times will earn the Hunt Master title (CRR-HM), or Hunt Master Excellent (CRR-HMX) if they run off leash.
- The handler **must** stop 3 ft away from the hide once it is located by the dog, to demonstrate that the dog had not been led to it by the handler.
- The handler must be able to call their dog off of at least 1 hide successfully to prepare their dog for the following levels. Hunting partners must now display evidence of teamwork.

Rats: 3

Distractions: 2 (marked)

Time: 8 minutes

Length of the Trail: 400-600 ft

Turns on the Trail: Up to 6

Leash: Off lead is strongly encouraged

Markers: Visible - further reduced/spaced out, and at least one hide will be unmarked

Hide Visibility: May be hidden

Height Limit: May be elevated up to 3 ft

3.5 Field Master (CRR-FM/CRR-FMX)

- Dogs who qualify **four** times will earn the Field Master title (CRR-FM), or Field Master Excellent (CRR-FMX) if they run their dog off leash.
- The handler **must** stop 4 ft away from the hide once it is located by the dog, to demonstrate that the dog had not been led to it by the handler.
- The handler must be able to successfully call their dog off of all hides.
- Hunting partners must display evidence of teamwork.

Rats: 1-4 (unknown)

Distractions: 1-3 (known - may be unmarked)

Time: 10 minutes

Length of the Trail: 500-700 ft

Turns on the Trail: Up to 7

Leash: Off lead (preferred/encouraged)

Markers: No markers for hides

Hide Visibility: All will be hidden

Height Limit: May be elevated up to 3 ft or below ground

3.6 Game Marshall (CRR-GM)

- Dogs who qualify **four** times will earn the Game Marshall title (CRR-GM).
- **There is no on leash option at this level.** All dogs should run off lead.
- Hunting partners must display evidence of teamwork as they work as a team with another hunting partner (dog and handler). **There must be one handler per dog.**
- Dogs must be known to work well together. **Dogs can be owned by one handler, as long as a second person is handling the second dog.**
- Teams will work on their own, traversing a trail and back, keeping a tally of the number of rats found. Handlers should visually check for a cage to confirm a rat has been found.
- The tally is returned to the secretary with the name of the dogs once they completed the trail. If the tally is correct, the dogs will receive a qualifying run towards their title.

Rats: 1-4 (unknown)

Distractions: 1-3 (unknown)

Time: Not timed

Length of the Trail: No specific length

Turns on the Trail: No specific # of turns

Leash: Off lead

Markers: No markers

Hide Visibility: All will be hidden

Height Limit: May be elevated up to 3 ft, below ground, and up to 3 ft away from the trail.

Section 4 - Titles and Distinctions

4.1 Excellent Distinction

- Handlers are encouraged to run their dogs off leash starting in the Huntsman level to earn an Excellent distinction. For example, if a dog completes the 3 required passes of Huntsman while off leash, the dog would earn the title of Country Rat Race Huntsman Excellent (CRR-HX). **The Scouts and Game Marshall levels are not applicable to earn the Excellent Distinction.**
- Judges may make the decision to disallow a dog from running the course off leash based on their observations of the dog. Behaviours which may result in a dog being unable to run off leash may include, but is not limited to, how rough they are with the materials, props, and/or rat cages. **The judge's ruling is always final and will not be challenged in any way.**

4.2 Championship Titles

Championship titles are earned for each level, with a given number of successful passes within the obstructed element. The titles are as follows:

- **Champion** - Requires the title in the same level as noted in Section 3.

Champion Titles	Requirements
Scouts Champion (CRR-SCH)	3 additional qualifying runs
Huntsman Champion (CRR-HCH/CRR-HCHX)	
Hunt Master Champion (CRR-HMRCH/CRR-HMRCHX)	
Field Master Champion (CRR-FMCH/CRR-FMCHX)	2 additional qualifying runs
Game Marshall Champion (CRR-GMCH)	4 additional qualifying runs

- **Grand Champion** - Requires the title in the same level from Champion.

Grand Champion Titles	Requirements
Scouts Grand Champion (CRR-SGCH)	3 additional qualifying runs
Huntsman Grand Champion (CRR-HGCH/CRR-HGCHX)	
Hunt Master Grand Champion (CRR-HMGCH/CRR-HMGCHX)	
Field Master Grand Champion (CRR-FMGCH/CRR-FMGCHX)	2 additional qualifying runs
Game Marshall Grand Champion (CRR-GMGCH)	3 additional qualifying runs

- **Master Champion** - Requires the title in the same level from Grand Champion.

Master Champion Titles	Requirements
Scouts Master Champion (CRR-SMCH)	2 additional qualifying runs
Huntsman Master Champion (CRR-HMCH/CRR-HMCHX)	3 additional qualifying runs
Hunt Master Master Champion (CRR-HMMCH/CRR-HMMCHX)	
Field Master Master Champion (CRR-FMMCH/CRR-FMMCHX)	2 additional qualifying runs
Game Marshall Master Champion (CRR-GMMCH)	3 additional qualifying runs

Section 5 - Glossary

5.2 Revision History

May 2025 Changes:

- General re-organization of the rulebook, addition of the table of contents and glossary.
- Re-wording of small details within the General Rules. Included new sections on Procedures, Entry limits, as well as Disqualifications.
 - Handlers are permitted to ask for the elapsed or remaining time during their run. Judges can provide a warning for the time remaining as a courtesy.
 - Clarification of the procedures of the event, as to how it will run, definition of distractions/false hides, and more.
 - Accessible pathways are required for small dogs so that they may access high tubes in Explorer, Detective, and Investigator levels, without the dog needing to be lifted. Handlers can still lift their dogs up if they can and wish to do so.
 - Created entry limits for each trial, as well as waitlists.
- **Levels:** Several additions have been made to clarify the progression of each level. Within each level, the following has been added:
 - Cubs (CRR-C) is only able to be earned during classes, practice days, or try-it days. It is no longer available at trial events.
 - Added the new level of **Game Marshall**.
- **Titles and Distinctions:** Reorganization of titles and distinctions from descriptions per level to descriptions per title/distinction.
 - **Excellent Distinction:** Additional clarification to the abbreviations of the Excellent distinction titles. The Excellent Distinction shall be henceforth noted as X. Additional notation that judges may disallow a dog from running off lead as per their behaviours.
 - **Championship Titles:** Condensed into one section, per championship title. Revision of the Hunt Master Champion abbreviation from CRR-HMCH to CRR-HMRCH.
- **Glossary:** A reference guide and a history of revision is now included.

5.2 Reference Sheet

Level	Cubs*	1. Scouts	2. Huntsman	3. Hunt Master	4. Field Master	5. Game Marshall
Passes Needed	1 (optional)	2 passes	3 passes		4 passes	
Rats	1		2	3	1-4 (unknown)	
Time	3 minutes	5 minutes	7 minutes	8 minutes	10 minutes	Not timed
Distractions	None		1	2 (marked)	1-3 (known - may be unmarked)	1-3 (unknown)
Lead**	On leash		Optional	Off leash encouraged	Off leash preferred	Off leash
Length of Trail	100 ft	200-300 ft	300-500 ft	400-600 ft	500-700 ft	No specific length
Turns on the Trail	1	1-3	Up to 5	Up to 6	Up to 7	No specific # of turns
Markers	Visible		Visible - reduced	Visible - further reduced/spaced out	No markers	
Hide Visibility	Visible	May be hidden			All hides will be hidden	
Height Limit***	On the ground		May be elevated up to 2 ft	May be elevated up to 3 ft	May be elevated up to 3 ft or below ground	May be elevated up to 3 ft, below ground, and up to 3 ft away from the trail

* Cubs is an optional title only. It is available only during classes, practice days, or try-it days.

** Where applicable, running off leash is optional upon the request to run for the Excellent (CRR-X) title distinction.

*** An accessible path is required for heights above 2 ft for dogs to be able to access higher hides without needing to be lifted up. Handlers can still lift their dogs up if they can/wish to do so.