

So What's a Sheepdog Trial?

A sheepdog trial course tests a dog's ability to do the various jobs a sheepdog will see on the farm. Sheep may need to be gathered from the pasture, or moved about the farm or sorted and penned. While the trial is a competition wherein each handler attempts to show that their dog is tops, trials have proved of fundamental importance in directing the development and breeding of the Border Collie - a breed known for its performance.

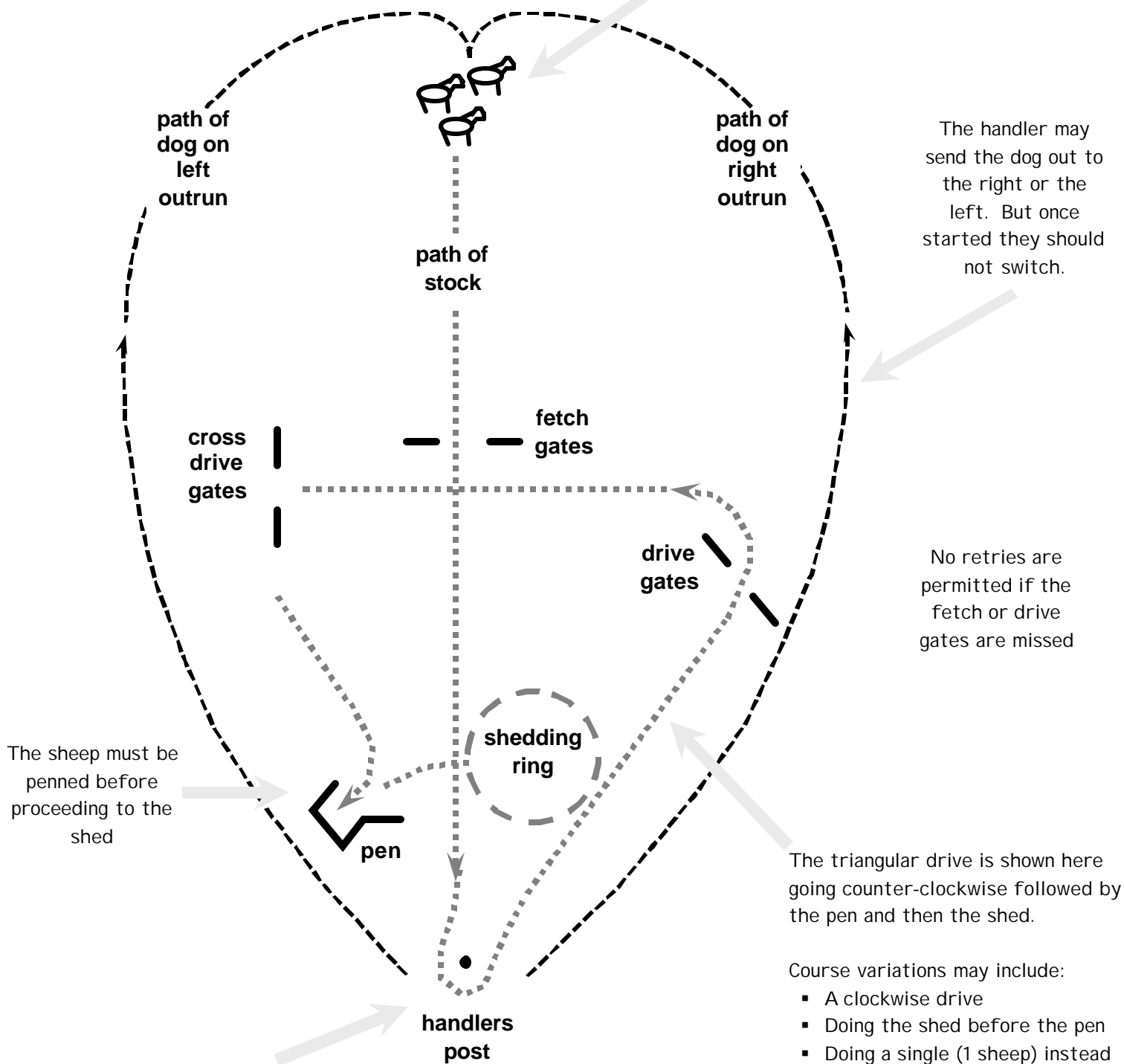
The trial course has 6 parts: Outrun, Lift, Fetch, Drive, Pen and Shed. The first three (outrun, lift and fetch) tests the dogs gathering ability, to find and retrieve a group of sheep in a controlled direct manner. The drive tests the dog's ability to move stock away from and under control of the shepherd. The Pen and Shed test the dog's ability to do the close in work and to work cooperatively with shepherd. A dog that can complete the course is one that can do most any job on the farm.

Each handler/dog team runs the same course and is judged on how smoothly and accurately they complete each phase. The score for a perfect run is as follows:

Outrun	20	Dog runs out wide and deep to get behind sheep
Lift	10	Dog makes contact and starts them moving
Fetch	20	Bring the sheep straight down the field, through the fetch gates and turn them around behind the post
Drive	30	Take the sheep in a triangular path from the post, through two sets of gates and back to the pen
Pen	10	Put the sheep in the pen and shut the gate
Shed	10	Bring the sheep from the pen to the shedding ring and split off two sheep from the rest
Total	100	

The judge will set a time limit to complete the course. Speed is not the object. A steady, controlled run is best.

A fresh group of sheep is set out at the top of the field for start of each run



The handler may send the dog out to the right or the left. But once started they should not switch.

No retries are permitted if the fetch or drive gates are missed

The sheep must be penned before proceeding to the shed

The triangular drive is shown here going counter-clockwise followed by the pen and then the shed.

The handler must stay at the post for the gather and drive.

Course variations may include:

- A clockwise drive
- Doing the shed before the pen
- Doing a single (1 sheep) instead of a shed (2 sheep)
- Doing a shed, then pen, and then single