

2026 Water Trial Manual Changes

Ref. #	Topic	pg #	Description	in the 2025 manual	2026 manual
1	Age requirement	11	Add an example	A dog must be at least six months of age on the day of the trial to enter the Junior Water Dog level and one year of age to enter the Apprentice level and above, unless the dog has successfully passed the Junior level.	A dog must be at least six months of age on the day of the trial to enter the Junior Water Dog level and one year of age to enter the Apprentice level and above, unless the dog has successfully passed the Junior level. For example, a dog whelped on January 1st is six months of age on July 1st.
2	Participation at 2 judge trials.	12	Allow judge family and household members to serve as club stewards but not substitute stewards under those judges, and allow family members and dogs that live with a judge to be judged by a different judge at multi judge trials.	Neither a judge nor any member of his/her immediate family or household, nor any dog that lives with a judge or any such family or household member, shall be eligible to compete at a trial where the judge is officiating or performing an observer or provisional judging assignment. "Competing" shall include acting as a substitute steward.	Neither a judge nor applicant judge performing an observer or provisional judging assignment may compete or act as a substitute steward at a trial where they are officiating, judge a dog that lives with them, or judge a dog handled by a member of their immediate family or household member. Family and household members may serve as club stewards at trials officiated by those judges, however, they may not serve as substitute steward for teams judged by those judges. At a trial with more than one judge, neither a judge nor applicant judge performing an observer or provisional judging assignment is permitted to compete or steward under a different judge, however their family and household members may compete and substitute steward under a different judge.
3	Equipment +/-	18	Add specific wording to replace "except where noted"	All equipment measurements allow a +/- 10% dimensional tolerance except where noted.	All equipment measurements allow a +/- 10% dimensional tolerance except for the overall length of the net, which must be no shorter than 65 feet.
4	Rubber toy underwater article	18	Remove requirement for 3 handles on the rubber underwater article	3-Handle Rubber Fetch Toy.	Non-floating rubber fetch toy with outside dimensions (length, width, and height) between 2" and 8".
5	Ball underwater article	18	Add to the description of the ball	The wiffle ball must be weighted so that it sinks immediately. It will sink faster if an additional five holes are drilled in the bottom.	A wiffle or pickleball ball, between 2" and 4" diameter, must be weighted so that it sinks immediately. A wiffle ball with holes on only one half may have additional holes drilled in it to allow it to sink faster.
6	Aggression policy	59	Change "disqualify" to "excuse"	The judge may disqualify any team whose dog is vicious, bites a person or, more than once, fights with another dog on the day of the trial (See Dog Aggression).	The judge may excuse any team whose dog is vicious, bites a person or, more than once, fights with another dog on the day of the trial (See Dog Aggression).
7a	Aggression policy	60	Add words that introduce the aggression policy and add/clarify reporting requirements	<i>please see the 2025 manual to read the aggression policy included there</i>	CHAPTER 5: DOG AGGRESSION Whenever dog aggression is witnessed at a water trial, which includes trial days and practice days, it must be reported to the Chair of the Water Trial Host Committee. The Host Committee must investigate and keep a written record of its findings and complete the reporting requirements as described below.

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					Excusal by the Judge
7b	Aggression policy	60	Make the aggression policy and procedure more clear		A judge shall excuse any dog that in their opinion menaces, threatens or exhibits any sign that it may not be safely approached in a normal manner by the judge or official trial stewards. Behavior may include growling, showing or snapping its teeth and rolling its eyes. The judge will write on the judging sheet: Excused: Aggression. The judge will also fill out the PWDCA Judge's Form for Dog Aggression, checking the boxes that are appropriate for the circumstances. This form must be completed on the day of the trial and given to the Chair of the Water Trial Host Committee who will include it in the formal written dog aggression report submitted to the PWDCA Water Trial Committee Chair.
					Excusal by the Water Trial Host Committee
7c	Aggression policy	60	Add excusal by the Host Committee		A Water Trial Host Committee shall excuse a dog that in the opinion of the Committee has acted inappropriately aggressively toward a dog or a human. The Host Committee will fill out the Host Committee Form for Dog Aggression, checking the boxes that are appropriate for the circumstances. This form must be included in the formal written dog aggression report submitted to the PWDCA Water Trial Committee Chair.
					A dog excused by a Judge or a Water Trial Host Committee for aggression shall be excused from all remaining elements of that water trial event, including practice days and all remaining trials held in conjunction. NOTE: A dog excused by a Judge or a Water Trial Host Committee for aggression shall be excused from all remaining elements of that water trial event, including practice days and all remaining trials held in conjunction. Additionally, the dog may not participate in future water trials until notified by the PWDCA Water Trial Committee of approval to participate.
					Water Trial Host Committee Procedure
					If a dog is reported to the Water Trial Host Committee for attacking or menacing a person or another dog, a minimum of 3 members of the Water Trial Host Committee shall immediately investigate and solicit witness statements from all parties wishing to give statements. No opinion, conjecture or reference to any other event shall be allowed in witness statements.

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					<p>The Water Trial Host Committee shall together decide if inappropriate aggression has occurred and whether or not the dog should be excused. Where decisions are not unanimous a vote count shall be recorded.</p> <p>If the Water Trial Host Committee determines that the dog is not to be excused, the Host Committee Form for Dog Aggression and all related documents must be included with the trial report submitted by the Trial Secretary, but no formal Host Committee report to the PWDCA Water Trial Committee is required.</p>
7d	Aggression policy	60	Include all requirements in the manual and remove from the forms anything that appears to be additional rules that are not included in the manual		<p>After excusal by a Judge or by a Water Trial Host Committee, the PWDCA Water Trial Committee Chair must be notified by phone no later than the end of that day. All dog aggression forms and the written Host Committee report must be received by the PWDCA Water Trial Chair within 72 hours. The handler and/or owner will be given a copy of the aggression form(s) the day of the trial, or within 72 hours if they have left the trial site. Images of the form taken with a smart phone are sufficient.</p>
					<p>The report from the Host Committee must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dog's name and registration number 2. Dog owner's name and contact information 3. Completed Host Committee Dog Aggression Form 4. Completed Judge Dog Aggression Form (if the judge provided one) 5. Witness statements (if applicable) 6. Statement from the Host Committee that states why the dog was excused. If the decision was not unanimous the vote count must be included
7e	Aggression policy	60	Add that disqualification is a decision that may be made by the PWDCA Board of Directors		<p>The PWDCA Water Trial Committee will review the report within 72 hours and then immediately share the report along with its own recommendations with the PWDCA Board of Directors. The PWDCA Board of Directors may impose additional restrictions and may disqualify a dog from future water trials after considering the Judge's, Host Committee's and PWDCA Water Trial Committee's recommendations. Once the PWDCA Board of Directors has made a decision, the owner will be notified of the dog's eligibility for future water trials.</p>
					<p>Copies of aggression forms and report must also be included with the Trial Report submitted by the Trial Secretary to the PWDCA Water Trial Committee.</p> <p>Aggression reporting forms are available online in the water work section of pwdca.org and blank copies of aggression forms must be provided at the water trial site by the Trial Secretary.</p>