

FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (AISBL)

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HOOPERS REGULATIONS OF THE FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (FCI)



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FCI Regulations

FCI National Canine Organisations (NCO) are invited to promote the FCI Hoopers ideal and the regulations defined by the FCI.

The main purpose of the FCI Hoopers Regulations is to set a standard for FCI international competitions and to serve as a basis for FCI international judging guidelines and equipment standards. FCI NCOs should use them as a basis for developing their own regulations, differing only to accommodate local needs.

FCI Hoopers regulations and guidelines must be applied in FCI events and international hoopers events.

1. Introduction

FCI Hoopers is a dog competition open to all healthy and physically fit dogs. The dog registered to the hoopers competition must be vaccinated and identifiable following the instructions of the NCO and must have a competition certificate or other equivalent document approved by the NCO. A dog can participate in a competition with only one handler per day.

An FCI Hoopers competition is an event consisting of one or more runs, whereby a run is the single performance of a hoopers obstacle course. If the competition consists of several runs, the result of a team is the total of the individual run scores.

The aim of hoopers is for the handler to guide the dog through a course of obstacles. The dog is guided from the handling area (HA), so the dog has to work independently. This requires good basic obedience and communication between dog and handler, leading to full mutual cooperation and understanding. The most important thing in course performance is not the time, but a clear and fluid run.

The leash, collar or harness of the dog, a toy or treat pouch can be on the handler, but must be hidden from view, before the handler steps into the handling area. During the run the handler is not allowed to hold anything in their hands. The handler is allowed to reward the dog inside the ring, after the final hoop has been taken. If the handler rewards with a toy, it must not be thrown, but given out of the hand. Rewarding with food is not allowed within the ring at any point. The dog is allowed to wear elastic hair bands if the dog breed requires it for the sake of eyesight. No other equipment is allowed on the dog. However, as bitches in season are allowed to compete, it is the organizer together with the judge to decide if protective pants can be worn during the run or if they need to be left behind the start hoop.

2. Categories

2.1. Size categories

In FCI international hoopers competitions, dogs are divided into two size categories according to their height at the withers:

- Small: Dogs measuring 40 cm or less
- Large: Dogs measuring more than 40 cm

Dogs can only enter one category. All dogs must be officially measured before entering their first hoopers competition. An FCI-NCO approved hoopers judge who signs the entry in the record book can measure the dogs. The first official measurement may take place no earlier than when the dog is 15 months of age. The measurement result determines the dog's size category for competition.

2.2. Class categories

There are three levels of class categories in hoopers:

- Hoopers 1 (H1)
- Hoopers 2 (H2)
- Hoopers 3 (H3)

FCI and international events will be held in the highest competition class, Hoopers 3 (H3).

A dog will be eligible to participate in a higher level of class category after having achieved the qualification in the previous level of class category.

An NCO is free to introduce a beginner's class H0 on a national level.

3. Courses

An FCI hoopers course is built using up to four types of different obstacles. The dog must navigate the obstacles in the correct order, handled by the handler from the HA. The way in which obstacles are placed, how many of them are used and their distance from the HA determine the degree of difficulty of the course. For each competition the course design must take into account the differences in these levels of categories. To ensure safety and appropriate course flow for smaller size dogs, adjusted distances should be taken into consideration for the small size category.

3.1. General

The competition ring size in which an FCI hoopers course is built must be at least 800m² and square or rectangular in shape. The shorter side must be 20 m or more. Exceptions must be approved by the judge. When two rings are used, it is advisable to have a closed partition between them or to separate them by a distance of at least 10 m.

Fencing of the ring is highly recommended for security reasons.

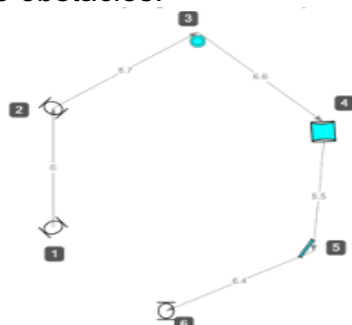
The first and last obstacle of the course must be a hoop. At least 50% of the obstacles to be completed must be hoops.

The minimum and maximum straight-line distance between consecutive obstacles and the distance between HA and the furthest obstacle varies according to the size and class categories (see table below).

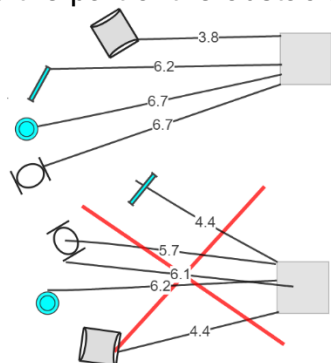
Two obstacles that are not consecutive must be separated by at least 2 meters.

H1	Small	Large
Handling area (square or circle)	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m
Number of obstacles	12 – 18 obstacles	12 – 18 obstacles
Distance between obstacles	5 – 8 m	5 – 8 m
Distance to furthest obstacle from the HA	Maximum 12 m	Maximum 15 m
H2	Small	Large
Handling area (square or circle)	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m
Number of obstacles	16 – 22 obstacles	16 – 22 obstacles
Distance between obstacles	6 – 10 m	6 – 10 m
Distance to furthest obstacle from the HA	Maximum 18 m	Maximum 20 m
H3	Small	Large
Handling area (square or circle)	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m	2 x 2 m /diameter 2 m
Number of obstacles	20 – 26 obstacles	20 – 26 obstacles
Distance between obstacles	7 – 12 m	7 – 12 m
Distance to furthest obstacle from the HA	Maximum 25 m	Maximum 30 m

The distance between obstacles is measured in a straight line from center to center of the obstacles.



The maximum distance to the furthest obstacle is measured from the side of the HA to the part of the obstacle that is nearest to the HA.



3.2. FCI Course design

The design of the course is up to the judge. The natural handling side should change at least once in H1 and at least twice in H2 and H3.

A well-designed course allows the dog to go round easily and smoothly, testing different skills and abilities of both the dog and the handler. The aim is to get the correct balance between vocal cues and body language to complete the course without faults.

The obstacles must be marked with numbers. The position of the numbers must make it clear from which side the obstacle is to be taken. For barrels and gates, if the number is placed in the middle of the obstacle, the running side of the obstacle can be decided by the handler.

The numbers should be clearly visible from the HA. It is recommended to use number plates that can be attached to the obstacles.

Before the start of the competition, the judge should inspect the obstacles put at their disposal and ensure that they meet the FCI standards. The judge may decide to build the course with assistance or provide their course design to the organizing committee who then build the course. The judge checks the course according to their course design.

When building the course, the judge uses the available obstacles at their discretion. The minimum number of obstacles required to be available per ring is:

15 Hoops, 5 Barrels, 3 Gates, 2 Tunnels/Chutes

The difference between FCI hoopers H1, H2 and H3 courses are:

- The degree of technical difficulty
- The amount of the obstacles used
- The distance between the obstacles
- The distance from the HA to the furthest obstacle

3.3. FCI Trials

No practice is allowed on the course, but competitors have the opportunity to familiarize with the course attending a course walk without their dogs before the trial begins. The course walk can be carried out in one or more groups of competitors allowing them the same amount of time to prepare for the trial.

Before starting the trial, the judge may brief the handlers, explaining them the nature of the competition, reminding them of the rules and practices.

3.3.1. Start

The judge informs the ring steward when the next competitor is allowed to enter the ring. It is allowed to carry the dog into the ring. The handler is not allowed to start

before the judge has signaled that they are ready. If the dog is still on the lead, then the dog's lead and collar must be taken off. For safety reasons, dogs must never wear these during a trial. The handler is not allowed to have anything in their hands during a trial or use any extras.

The handler places the dog in lying, sitting or standing position in front of the first hoop and removes the collar or harness. The leash can be left to the ring steward or carried in the handler's pocket out of sight. If the leash is still visible after the handler steps into the handling area, the team gets a disqualification result.

The maximum course time of 3 minutes starts from the moment the judge gives the start signal (e.g. whistle or raising the hand) and ends when the dog completes the last hoop in the correct direction.

After the judge gives the signal to start, the handler leaves the dog in front of the first hoop. When leaving the dog to start, the handler may mark up to the three first obstacles before entering the HA, without touching the obstacles. If the handler leaves the dog before the judge has given the start signal, it results in a disqualification. The handler can go back to the dog as often as necessary, as long as the handler is not yet in the HA. If the dog passes through the start hoop or any other obstacle before the handler is in the HA, the team is disqualified.

If the handler is already in the HA and returns to the dog to set it back in place when the dog has not yet completed the first obstacle, the team will receive one fault each time the handler leaves the HA. The third exit from the HA will result in a disqualification.

If the dog starts the course without completing the first hoop or is partially through the start hoop, the handler must step out of the HA to correct the starting position of the dog. If the handler sends the dog without leaving the HA, they will be disqualified.

The run starts when the dog completely crosses the first hoop in the correct direction. If the start hoop is not taken and not corrected the result is a disqualification.

3.3.2. During the run

The handler's task is to guide the dog to complete the course in the correct order designed by the judge without leaving the HA or touching the dog or the obstacles. The handler uses only vocal cues and/or body language. They are not allowed to hold anything in their hands during the run.

(Exemptions like a walking cane or other walking aids for handlers will be discussed with the judge.) It is not allowed to use any extras to navigate the dog through the course (such as a whistle).

3.3.3. Finish

The run ends when the dog completes the last hoop in the correct direction. If the dog misses the final hoop, it needs to be corrected. If the last hoop is not taken and not corrected the result is a disqualification.

The handler is allowed to reward the dog inside the ring, after the final obstacle has been negotiated. A toy reward must not be thrown, but given out of the handler's hand. A food reward is at no time allowed in the ring except in a closed pocket.

The dog must leave the competition ring immediately, under the control of the handler.

4. FCI obstacles

The obstacles approved by the FCI are:

- Hoop
- Barrel
- Gate
- Chute
- Tunnel (until end of 2029)

Obstacles may under no circumstances be unsafe for the dogs. They must comply with the following specifications and be in accordance with the enclosed drawings.

In a course the color of obstacles can vary. Each type of obstacle used in a ring must be of the same style.

4.1. Hoop

All hoops used in a course must be of the same style.

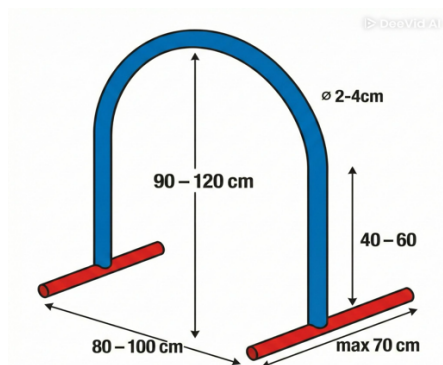
Hoops are made of lightweight, shatterproof material that does not have sharp edges. A crossbar between the legs is not allowed. The hoop consists of a lower body and an attached arch. The lower half of a hoop must be made of material that is clearly visible to dogs and contrasts with the surroundings. The arch is made of solid plastic or aluminum, and the color can be chosen freely. The legs must be designed to ensure a stable stand. The ends of the hoop's legs must be covered (closed pipe ends). The hoop must not have sharp points that could injure the dog. Hoops may be secured by small sand bags due to weather conditions.

Height	90 – 120 cm
Width	80 – 100 cm
Frame and arch thickness	2 – 4 cm
Height of the frame pole	40 – 60 cm
Length of the support leg	On one side or both sides, the maximum length is 70 cm

In single-leg hoops, the support leg must always be placed on the side of the outer arm. When designing the course, approaches where the dog's line crosses the support leg should be avoided.

Performance:

The dog completes the obstacle in the given direction determined by the judge by going through it completely.



4.2. Barrel

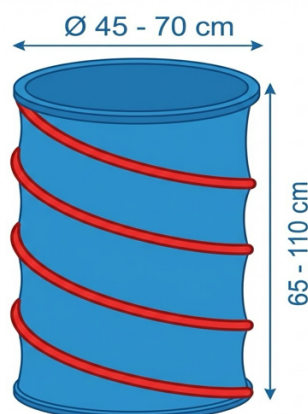
All barrels used in a course must be of the same style.

Barrels can be made of a solid plastic material or from a flexible material but should be made of dimensionally stable material. The barrel must be closed on all sides. If a barrel has a base colour that is not easily visible to dogs, contrast stripes must be applied. It is not allowed to fix a barrel to its place, because of safety reasons. The barrel should be weighed down on the inside using weights that have no sharp edges and must be flexible but provide sufficient stability to the barrels so that they don't move even if touched by the dog.

Height	65 – 110 cm
Diameter	45 – 70 cm

Performance:

The dog goes around the side(s) of the barrel determined by the judge.



4.3. Gate

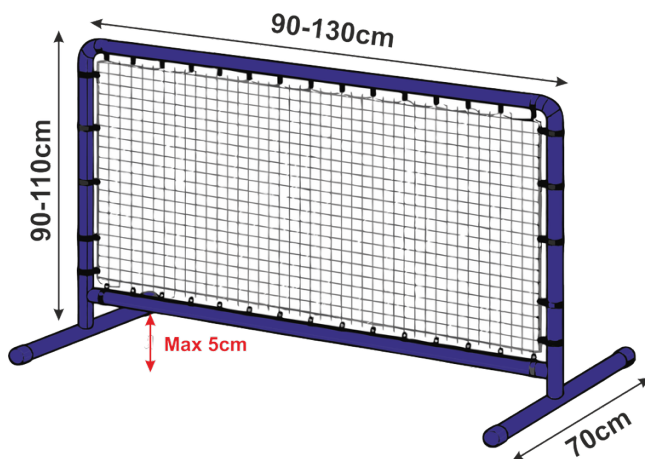
All gates used in a course must be of the same style.

A gate is made of lightweight, shatterproof material, that does not have sharp edges. A gate must have a structure that allows some sort of visual contact with the handler and must be designed in a way that no dog can run through it. To prevent injuries, no parts should come loose if a dog collides with the gate. Gates are set up to be tip-proof, equipped with supports on one or both sides at the bottom. These supports must be designed to ensure a stable stand. Supports that are shortened or angled to match the expected path of the dog are permitted. Due to weather conditions small sandbags may be used to provide stability.

Height	90 – 110 cm
Width	90 – 130 cm
Gap from frame to ground or net	0 – 5 cm
Length of the support leg	On one side or both sides the maximum 70 cm in total
Thickness of the frame and arch	2 – 4 cm
Network mesh size	Max. 5 x 5 cm Net or a partially see-through tarp

Performance:

The dog goes around the gate in the way the judge has determined, but only in the direction of the obstacle. Passing on the small side (laterally) is not allowed.



4.4. Chute

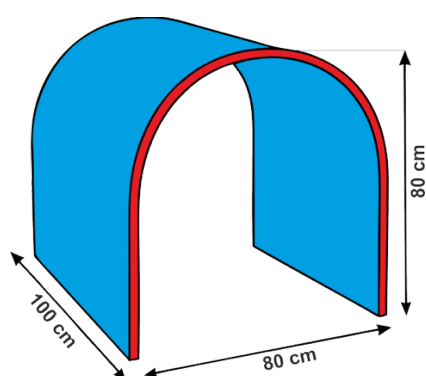
All chutes used in a course must be of the same style. It is not allowed to mix chutes and tunnels in a course.

A chute is made of flexible material and a frame to make it dimensionally stable. It is not allowed to have a frame in the running line of the dog. Colors that are easily visible to the dog should be chosen. Due to weather conditions small sandbags may be used to provide stability.

Height	80 cm
Width	80 cm
Length	100 cm

Performance:

The dog completes the chute in the given direction determined by the judge, by going through it.



4.5. Tunnel

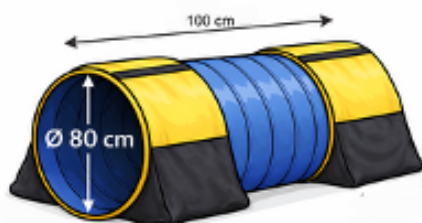
All tunnels used in a course must be of the same style. Tunnels may be used until the end of 2029.

A tunnel should always be extended to its full length. The tunnel can be secured into position by using at least two sand or water bags, one on each end. The outer edge of the tunnel weight must not have handles or any other parts standing out that could be dangerous to the dog.

Diameter	80 cm
Length	100 cm

Performance:

The dog completes the tunnel in the given direction determined by the judge, by going through it.



5. Handling Area

The handling area (HA) must be either circular or square in shape.

The color of the HA must clearly contrast with the ground so that the judge or judge's assistant can easily determine if the handler is within the HA or has stepped outside.

If the boundary of the HA is not fully visible due to uneven terrain or tall grass, the organizer must provide an elevated standing position for the judge's assistant overseeing the HA.

For participants with mobility impairments, possible modifications to the HA will be discussed before the competition with the head judge.

Performance:

The handler is completely in the HA when both feet are on the ground. Throughout the entire run, the handler must remain inside the HA. Stepping on the boundary of the HA is permitted, but as soon as one foot is completely over the line, the handler is outside the HA and thus disqualified.

Shape	Round or square
Size	2 x 2 meters or 2 meters diameter
Material	Hose pipe 2 - 7 cm diameter Band or tape 5 - 8 cm width

6. Numbering of the obstacles

Each obstacle of the course has to be marked with a number. Numbers must be made from safe, shatter-proof materials and must not pose any danger to the dog at any time.

The numbers should preferably be written on both sides of the sign, using the same size font. They must be clearly visible from the HA. Number signs can be placed on the ground on the side the obstacle has to be taken or clipped on top of the obstacles. They must be outside of the running line of the dog at all times.

7. Judging

The performance will be judged by a single judge, the head judge. There might be assistant judges or ring stewards or approved technical aides to facilitate judging e.g. observing the HA. The decisions of the head judge are final.

There are different kinds of faults

- Handler-related faults
- Obstacle-related faults
- Dog-related faults

7.1. Faults

Each fault will result in five (5) demerit points. Any attempt to take an obstacle will be judged. The dog has completed the obstacle when it has completely crossed the obstacle line with all paws.

A) Handler-related faults

- The handler steps out of the HA before the dog takes the first obstacle. The third time will result in a disqualification.
- The handler calls the dog into the HA.

B) Obstacle-related faults

- The dog refuses or skips an obstacle. Each obstacle missed incurs one (1) fault. No extra fault is given, if the dog is sent back to correct the performance.
- The dog leaves the running line: the running line is the direct path from one obstacle to another. The dog stops following the intended route and must make a clear directional correction to get back on track.

I. Hoop

- Dog passes a hoop without performing it correctly with all four paws.
- The dog knocks over a hoop that does not have to be taken again during the run.

II. Barrel/Gate

- Dog passes the obstacle from the wrong side
- Dog goes around the barrel in the wrong direction
- Dog knocks over a barrel that does not have to be taken again during the run
- Dog jumps over the barrel or gate
- Dog takes a barrel/gate out of the running order

III. Chute/Tunnel

- Dog passes a chute without performing it correctly with all four paws.
- Dog enters the chute and exits from the same end without passing through it
- Dog jumps over the chute or on top of the chute

C) Dog related faults

- The dog engages with the handler e.g. jumps up on the handler in the HA
- Interruption of the fluent run: e.g. turning or spinning, stopping, sniffing, standing still or the handler stops the dog etc.

7.2. Disqualification

The team will be disqualified if any of the following occurs:

- The handler does not step out of the HA to correct the dog when the dog starts incorrectly.
- Unseemly behavior towards the judge, other officials or competitors
- Harsh handling of the dog at any time during the entire competition
- Unsporting behavior e.g. obvious side handling, obviously distracting another competitor or dog
- The dog goes completely through any obstacle before the handler is in the HA.
- The dog is wearing a leash, collar or harness during the run.
- The dog urinates or defecates in the competition ring.
- The dog is aggressive towards people or other dogs at any time during the competition.
- The handler deliberately touches their dog during the run.
- The handler holds something in his/her hand.
- The leash, collar, harness of the dog or any motivational object (toy) is visible after the handler entered the HA.
- The handler leaves the dog at the start hoop before the judge has given the start signal.
- The handler eats food, drops food or feeds the dog inside the ring at any time.
- The handler steps out of the HA for a third time when the dog has not yet started the run by completing the first obstacle.
- The handler steps with one foot completely out of the HA (it is allowed to step on the line).
- If the dog destroys (e.g., by knocking down) an obstacle before the obstacle is taken or when it has to be taken again later in the course in such a way that it cannot be taken correctly.
- Three (3) faults in a row
- The handler uses an extra item (e.g. whistle) to send the dog through the course.
- The handler touches, moves or breaks any obstacle at any time during course walk or performance or moves the HA.
- The team has not finished the course within the maximum course time of three (3) minutes.
- The dog is out of control – for example, leaving the ring, running around the field uncontrollably, snapping at the handler or exhibiting other unwanted behavior
- The handler trains on the course before or after the run.
- The dog takes a hoop or chute/tunnel out of the running order.
- The dog performs a hoop or chute in the wrong direction.
- The dog did not take the start or finish hoop in the designated direction.

- The handler throws a toy to reward the dog

The disqualification must be indicated clearly (e.g. whistle) by the judge. When disqualified, the handler and dog must leave the ring as quickly as possible, unless the judge decides otherwise.

Note: If the course is built in such a way that the dog, when running in its natural path, could take an additional obstacle after the run is finished, it is not considered as a disqualification.

FORCE MAJEURE

Under circumstances beyond the handler's control (e.g., another dog entering the ring, wind moves an obstacle etc.) the judge can stop the run and when the course is rebuilt, the judge will restart the run from the beginning.

All faults incurred before the dog was stopped still apply. Up to that point, no other faults are given. However, the handler still must negotiate the course to the best of their ability. Additional faults are incurred only after the point at which the handler was stopped.

8. Ranking

Flawless performance is the best performance.

If the competition consists of several runs, the result of a team is the total of the individual run scores. If the results are the same, the placement will be split between the teams with the same results achieved.

9. Organizing an FCI international competition

Clubs wanting to organize an FCI international hoopers competition must:

1. Have a ring of 800m² with the shorter side must be minimum of 20 m creating a square or rectangle.
2. Appoint a judge approved by the National Canine Organization and the FCI to officiate.

In addition, an assistant judge may be appointed where the organizers deem it necessary, to assist the judge to officiate the course. The assistant judge may be authorized to judge specific obstacles or sequences within the course as pre-determined by the main judge. The responsibility for all decisions made will be that of the main judge whose decisions will be final.

3. Provide a necessary number of stewards to run a competition smoothly, which includes:
 - A scribe who notes the faults signaled by the judge, so the judge need not take his/her eyes off the dog.

- 1 -2 HA watchers to check when the handler has entered the HA and that the handler remains within the HA during the course performance.
- Timekeeper to measure the maximum course time of 3 minutes
- Two equipment stewards in charge of rebuilding obstacles.
- Two secretaries in charge of the scoreboard, filling in the record books and sorting out the placements.
- A ring steward to show competitors in and out of the ring.
- A team available to build the course according to the judge's instructions.

10. Trials / classes

Two sorts of trials are organized:

- International hoopers trials sanctioned by the FCI
- National hoopers trials sanctioned by the FCI-NCO

10.1. International hoopers trials sanctioned by the FCI

- Open to all dogs over 24 months and in possession of a FCI recognized pedigree (studbook/appendix).
- Dogs must be tattooed or chipped and their owners/handlers must be members of a club belonging to a National Canine Organization affiliated to the FCI.
- Competitors must have a valid record book, or a license issued by their FCI-NCO.
- Bitches in heat are permitted to compete in FCI international trials.
- FCI-C.A.C.I.H is only awarded in FCI international competitions and at the trial of the highest hoopers level in each country.
- International hoopers trials follow the FCI hoopers rules.
- Official classes are divided into three levels:
 - a. FCI Hoopers 1**
Open only to beginner dogs
 - b. FCI Hoopers 2**
Open only to dogs that have achieved the national requirements to move up to level 2 – for example: certain number of placements with a clear round in Hoopers 1 trials.
 - c. FCI Hoopers 3**
Open only to dogs that have achieved the national requirements to move up to level 3 – for example: certain number of placements with a clear round in Hoopers 2 trials.
- Downgrading of the competition level is possible, depending on the regulations of the FCI-NCO.
- The rules apply to both size categories; small and large.
- The results obtained in the official trials are recorded in the dog's record book or in a data record associated with the dog's license.
- A dog can participate in a competition with one handler only.

10.2. National hoopers trials sanctioned by the FCI-NCO

- Open to all dogs over 18 months old, with or without pedigree.
- Dogs must be tattooed or chipped and their owners/handlers must be members of a club belonging to a National Canine Organization affiliated to the FCI.
- Competitors must have a valid record book, or a license issued by their FCI-NCO.
- Left to the initiative of each country, these trials should hold the hoopers ideals high and ensure the safety of both dogs and handlers. The FCI-NCO can apply the FCI hoopers rules or have separate national rules. If separate rules are set up, the FCI-NCO should try to follow to the FCI rules as closely as possible.
- The national rules can determine the classes and categories, as well as the criteria by which dogs move up or down between levels and other possible national specificities.

10.3. Ineligibility to enter

The following dogs are not eligible to compete:

- Pregnant bitches 33 days or more after mating
- Bitches less than 75 days after whelping
- Dogs that are apparently ill, injured or physically unfit
- Doped dogs

Dogs coming from or going to a region infected with rabies must have a valid inoculation certificate against rabies. Visiting handlers/dogs from other countries must show that they are a member of a club affiliated to an NCO recognized by the FCI and that they compete in official competitions trials in their own country.

Competing in a foreign country while the competitor has lost the right to compete in their own country, should lead to disciplinary action by their own FCI-NCO.

Competitors are expected to be on their best behaviour and properly dressed.

Harsh handling is severely condemned and results in immediate disqualification. A complaint may also be lodged against the handler.
The organizing club has the right to refuse entry to any competitor.