

Temperament / Drive / Work Ethic and How It Applies to Ratings

Nathaniel Roque, Usca Director of Judges

(For Breed Suitability as well as to determine the “best dog performance” on any given day the overall dog and performance should be evaluated for the dog’s temperament, character and natural drives in the work combined with proper training and correct execution of the exercise.)

In determining the basic potential rating of a dog’s performance, we should be evaluating the dog based on **character / temperament, performance and training** of the dog, not just the trained behavior of the dog. (USCA is a breed club and our trials and titles are also used as a test of breed suitability.)

1. “V” Excellent Rating:

1.1 In most situations can only be achieved if the dog’s temperament / character is “V” Excellent and the training and performance in trial are excellent or high very good.

1.2 Exceptions: Occasionally the “SG” Very Good dog (temperament / character) due to excellent training and displaying an excellent technical performance may fall into the low “V” (96). This may happen in any phase, but rarely in the “C” (protection) phase due to the clear requirements in “C” for a confident, intense, dominant dog displaying an excellent performance. Conversely the “V” dog with a poor performance or poor training will earn a “SG” or lower rating due to the training (points), not the dog’s character / temperament.

2. “SG” Very Good Rating:

2.1 In most situations can only be achieved if the dog’s temperament / character is “SG” Very Good and the training and performance are “SG”

2.2 Exceptions: Occasionally a “V” dog with lesser training and a poor performance may fall into the SG or lower rating or a high “G” dog with exceptional training and the performance is very good may fall into the low “SG” due to the “points allotted in the different exercises of the “game of IPO”

And so on through all ratings

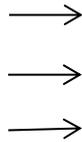
If the dog’s natural character / temperament is “M-B-G-SG-V” and the training is good, that is usually where the dog will or should place in its overall rating. (i.e., when both the dog’s character / temperament and training and performance are being evaluated.)

It is sometimes explained as “*the dog’s training allowed it to show better than the actual quality of the dog*”, or in reverse “*the quality of the dog is much better than the level of the training and rating today*”. When judging the dog’s temperament / character / drive and training / performance along with the handler’s performance in any given exercise or overall phase with the occasional exception, the performance or training may move the rating up or down. (i.e., the low side of the higher rating or high side of the lower rating, but never excessively to a higher or lower rating.) Rarely will training alone make a “V” rating without a “V” dog. “V” Excellent is a rating category that must be used only for the “total package” excellent training, performance and importantly excellent dog if we are to maintain the “breed” quality.

Judging not only the trained performance, but the “whole dog” for breed suitability. Separation from the lower rating to the higher rating taking into account the dog’s character / temperament / drives / harmony with handler / training / performance to determine the rating and points for each exercise and phase.
(Applies to all phases, exercises and ratings.)

EXAMPLE: The training, performance, and temperament of the dog places it into one of the categories listed (B, G, SG) barring any mandatory mistakes. (The dog’s character / temperament must influence the rating.)

SG
G
B



EXAMPLE: The dog with same training, performance but has stronger character / temperament (drive) will and should in most cases be properly evaluated into the higher level. (SG training / performance, but with “V” drive / temperament may move to a “V”.)

V
SG
G

In general, remember that the dog’s character / temperament must meet the description of the rating as well as the trained behavior and performance. An example is the technically perfect dog in protection: calm full grips, outs correctly and obedience is correct, but the dog does not have the drive, intensity, confidence, and / or active fighting drives, cannot be “V” Excellent (due to not having “V” temperament and should not be rated “V” Excellent). It is important to explain these strengths or weaknesses in the critique, so it is understood what makes the rating - performance, training and the overall character / temperament. EXAMPLE: The best training still needs the character / temperament of the dog to make the rating. A “G” dog can never, even with the best training, make “V”

Important Components of the Working Dog Performance

At all times be aware of the dog’s overall temperament in your evaluation to provide information to determine your rating. (ability to handle stress, environment, interaction with people and other animals)

Tracking

1. Temperament approaching the track (free – willing to work)
2. Confident
3. Drive into the track (hunt, search drives)
4. Technique in the tracking and indication
5. Relationship / Harmony with the handler (teamwork)

Obedience

1. Temperament in the obedience exercises (free – willing to work)
2. Confident
3. Attention to handler (harmony / rhythm with the handler)
4. Overall position (parallel, shoulder in line with knee, close-by but not impeding the handler)
5. Execution of exercises (fast, accurate, willing)
6. Sure in the group and during gunfire (undistracted by its environment)

Protection

1. Opening – approach or attack / chase (powerful, confident, intense, dominant, controlled, etc.)
2. Pressure (sure, active, not negatively affected)
3. Transition (calm, clear change of drive from fight to out to guard)

4. Out (clear, clean, quick)
5. Guard (powerful, confident, intense, dominant, controlled aggression, etc.)