

# The Rottweiler As A Draft Animal - Part 1

By Diane Richardson & Dorianne Almann



frontierrots@msn.com

www.frontierrots.com



Dogs have been used as draft animals for centuries. Dogs have pulled Native American travois, milk delivery carts, wagons laden with varied loads, carts with human passengers, and hauled fishing nets to shore. Rottweilers also hauled machine guns, mortars, and supplies during World War 1. In the USA, Rottweilers are used to pull humans and loads for recreation, farm work, and to earn titles. Rottweilers are seen in parades pulling carts and wagons with people in them. They are seen on farms pulling wagons with hay for livestock. They are seen at shows and trials competing for titles.



2010 American Rottweiler Club Nationals

The titles available to Rottweilers are split into two subcategories: Drafting and Carting. The differences between the two categories are mainly in the rules and, in some cases, the style of cart or wagon used.

Carting titles are available to Rottweilers through the American Rottweiler Club, Bouvier des Flandres Club of America, and American Working Collie Association. Rottweilers can earn drafting titles through the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, Great Pyrenees Club of America, Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Club of America, and also from the AKC Draft Test and groups such as the New England Drafting and Driving Club. Rottweilers may also participate in Newfoundland club tests, but they will not issue titles to non-Newfoundlands.

## Drafting by Dorianne Almann

Moxie and I have entered Berner and Bouvier trials, so my focus is on trials sponsored by these clubs. As described in the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America's Draft Test Regulations, judges want to see the dog "evidence willingness and enjoyment of his work...[combined with] controlled teamwork with his handler and natural independence." Dogs are judged for "willingness, ability, enthusiasm, naturalness as a team, and smoothness of performance." Thus, trials of both clubs are a series of exercises focusing on the dog's natural ability in a working capacity involving hauling. Trials demonstrate a dog's natural ability and level of training

applicable to realistic work conditions, including the freight haul that ideally includes both uphill and downhill slopes and changes of terrain. "Realistic work conditions" extends to the weather, too: Mox and I saw days where the New England autumn day's weather was postcard pretty-and days when the wind bit and threatening skies released freezing rain that turned to wet snow. Rules governing tests of both clubs are broadly similar. Trials are not timed. Novice is done on leash. Both are pass/fail on each set of exercises. You must pass every exercise to earn a title-you will not go home with a title if you fail one exercise and pass everything else. Exercises focus on basic control: ring work-harnessing and hitching, maneuvering/practical draft work (forward, slow, normal, halt, back your dog), freight loading and unloading, and group stay. A distance freight haul is part of both clubs' trials, as is a pre-trial briefing where judges explain ring procedures, answer questions, and walk the course and the freight haul course with entrants. Both clubs recognize that work is involved-only dogs two years or older may enter their trials.

Obedience competitors in Berner- and Bouvier-sponsored trials will find Basic Control familiar since this exercise is a heeling pattern, though without the precision needed for competitive obedience. Multiple commands, signals, and verbal praise are permitted in all exercises of both clubs' trials. While there are similarities between trials held by both clubs, there are differences, some significant. Bouvier regulations, for example, do not stipulate the type of rig. Any of the following draft rigs may be used: cart, wagon, sled, toboggan or travois." (No mention of advertising signs!) To contain cost and provide flexibility to enter any trial open to Rotties, Moxie's rig is a cart. Her harness is a Siwash.



Dorianne Almann & Moxie

In Bouvier trials, a Carting Started title is not necessary for a dog to attempt a Carting Advanced title; Berner regulations require a Novice Draft Dog title before your dog moves to Open. Bouvier trials have one judge, Berner trials have two. In Bouvier trials your dog must back up twice, once after harnessing and again after being hitched to the rig, vs. backing up your hitched dog once in a Berner trial. The Bouvier freight haul is one mile vs. the Berner's half mile. During course familiarization, your leashed dog can accompany you while you walk the

Bouvier freight haul route while the Berners permit only handlers to walk the route. Bouvier trials have a veteran division for dogs seven years and older. Weight hauling requirements between the two clubs are different. Bouvier regulations permit your dog's rig to bump into an object with the dog obeying your commands to dislodge it (although if this happens more than twice, you fail). Compare this to a Berner trial: You fail if you, your dog or your rig comes into contact with any object. In addition to awarding titles to individual dogs, both clubs award titles to teams/braces. Berner drafting regulations stipulate that a brace is "two dogs of the same breed," while Bouvier regulations say "a team consists of two or more dogs working together in unison." One wonderful characteristic shared by participants in Berner and Bouvier trials-judges, stewards, competitors, and spectators-is their extraordinary friendliness and helpfulness.

*Editor's Note: Part 2 will be Ellen O'Connell on the carting side.*