

The Saint Bernard Club of America's



**Draft Test
Visual Illustrations**

What a Saint Bernard Draft Test Is All About



Lovey harnesses Senta while judge Dan observes.



Using verbal commands, Catherine guides Bandit into a sharp 90-degree turn. Note the benches laid on their sides to form the turn with the curbing already in place. The caution tape was used to designate the test area 3.



Beth encourages Rama to haul through one of the "narrows". Bales of straw were used in this instance as the tall "stationary narrow" area.



The 3-minute out of sight group stay performed by the participating dogs at the 2000 National Specialty in Tahoe.



Barry hitches Katrina to the cart for the 1-mile freight haul. Judge Ken checks the hitching job of Judy and Zachary.



What a team of saints looks like. Larry is preparing to back siblings Bonneville and Brenna. Red spray paint was used to designate the Distance the wheels of the cart have to travel.



Barry and Katrina have just completed the "removable obstacle" event. The gate is removed, Katrina hauls through and waits for the gate to be closed and then she and Barry proceed to the next event.



Preparing for a Draft Test

Below are some examples of homemade carts. Some are made from PVC pipe or electrical conduit and plywood or square pipe held together with bolts and nuts. A milk crate works well for a basket. Also, a travois can be seen below in the awards photo.

Judy (in front of dog) gives Cassie the "back" command while Debbie gently pulls on the ropes attached to the cart. See text portion for full explanation on training a dog to back with a cart.



Two simple lawn chairs can function to form a "narrow" area or can support a "removable obstacle" like a baby gate. Here, Debbie guides Precious between the chairs.



Larry harnesses Duncan. This is a "professionally" made custom harness. The dimensions of the dog were given over the phone to Jane Riffle of Nordkyn Outfitters. Notice the spreader bar near Duncan's tail to keep the harness from constricting rear movement during pulling.

This is Larry helping Tempo try on a homemade harness. It is cheaper and less frustrating to purchase a custom one.



Judy gets Mandy accustomed to pulling an object, in this case an old tire, before hitching Mandy to a cart for the first time.



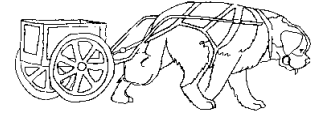
Lynn backs Bonneville the required 4 feet while judge Harry and judge Nancy observe. Notice the hand used for the "back" command.

John & Kris after earning Kris's Draft Dog title. Note the travois is easy to pack for transport. Since the travois has no wheels and cannot move backwards, the dog must be able to back himself 1 foot within the poles of the travois.



**A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO
ST. BERNARD CLUB OF AMERICA
DRAFTING (CARTING) WITH YOUR SAINT**

By Lynn Jech



So you own a St. Bernard! You want to do fun activities with your saint but you don't know what is available. Here some ideas. There are two Working Dog activities sanctioned by the St. Bernard Club of America (SBCA) that allow you and your dog to earn titles. These activities are Weight Pulling and Drafting (carting). Your dog does not have to be "show" quality to participate in these activities. However, to earn a title, your saint does need to be registered with AKC or have an AKC ILP (Indefinite Listing Privilege) number. If your saint is not registered, you can still do drafting just for fun.

Why do we do this? Titles of course, companionship with your dog, something neat to do and keeping the working dog spirit alive!

An outstanding spiral-bound book for you to learn about carting is "Newfoundland Draft Work" by Consie Powell. She explains the different types of harnesses and carts and how to train your saint for carting. You can obtain this and several other helpful books, plus carts, harnesses and instructions on how to build your own from the sources listed here:

NORDKYN OUTFITTERS

P.O. Box 1023
Graham, WA 98338
(253) 847 4128
Nordkyn@nordkyn.com
www.nordkyn.com

IKON OUTFITTERS

7597 Latham Road
Lodi, WI 53555
(608) 592-4397
www.ikonoutfitters.com

DOGWORKS

PO box 1185
Blue Bell, PA 19422
(800) 787-2788
www.dogworks.com

In the US, the Newfoundland Club of America has been doing Draft tests for many years and has in place well thought out rules and regulations. The St. Bernard Club of America adopted these rules and in 1988, the first Draft titles were conferred. The national dog clubs for Rottweilers, Great Pyrenees, Mastiffs, Collies, Bernese Mountain Dogs and Bouvier des Flanders also have similar rules and drafting exercises.

The Draft Test is a series of exercises that demonstrate the working abilities of a team consisting of a handler and St. Bernard. The complete test is done off leash and the only time you are allowed to touch the dog is during the Harnessing and Hitching portion or between exercises to praise your dog. The Draft Test is scored differently than an AKC Obedience trial in that the Draft Test is pass/fail and not scored by points and there are 2 officiating judges. Generally, the handler does most of the failing. Also, you are allowed to talk to and signal your dog and give multiple commands.

There are 4 parts of the test. These will be discussed only briefly here.

Part 1 of the draft test is BASIC OBEDIENCE where the dog (without the cart) must heel at your side while you walk for a couple of left, right and "about" turns, sit when you stop walking and adjust his speed with yours as you walk "normal", fast or slow. You are allowed to talk to and encourage your dog. The last step of the Basic Obedience is the "Recall" where the dog is placed at a sit on one side of the ring, you walk to the other side and at the judges' order, call the dog. The dog must come to you on the FIRST command (once the dog is moving, you can clap your hands, beg, plead whatever!) and preferably sit in front of you, although this is not required.

Part 2 of the test is HARNESSING AND HITCHING. The dog is placed at a sit or stand while you harness him. You and your dog must demonstrate cooperation. Once harnessed, the dog must back up 4 feet on command preferably in a straight line. The least the dog must do is back up without going in a circle. This is potentially the hardest part of the test (it also has to be done later while hitched to the cart) and should be taught to the dog BEFORE you teach him to sit (see end of article on how to train dog to back). Then the harnessed dog is hitched to the cart and a few steps are taken forward so the judges can determine that the harness/cart apparatus is safe, sturdy and won't rub on the dog.

Part 3 is the MANUEVERING portion. The saint must pull the cart (remember this is off leash) through a series of objects made to resemble what a dog might encounter if it were working in town delivering goods. There needs to be sharp 90° turns, some sweeping turns, a couple of narrow areas (one short and one tall) and a removable obstacle such as a gate. For this exercise, the handler would place the dog on a "stay", open the gate, call the dog through, tell the dog to halt, place the dog on a stay and the handler closes the gate behind the dog and cart. One important thing about the maneuvering course is that the handler must think ahead to choose the best path. There are only 2 "bumps" allowed on

the obstacles so the handler must guide the dog carefully. Also during this portion of the test the dog must back the cart 3 feet. When we set up a test, we try to make an intentional dead-end from which the dog must back.

Part 4 of the Draft test is the 1-mile FREIGHT HAUL. All of the carts are loaded with pre-weighed weights of at least 25 lbs (50 lbs for teams). The object here is NOT to pull heavy weight but just to change the weight of the cart. Also, the handlers are tested here to see if they can properly load and secure weight to a cart without upsetting the balance. If the cart tips on its side on a steep incline or a curb then the team fails. After loading and securing the weights, the teams of dog/handlers then do a 3 minute "out of sight" stay. The handlers walk out of sight of the dog for 3 minutes (similar to Farmer Hans taking 2 gallons of milk into the house of a customer and chatting for 3 minutes!). After the group stay, the teams then walk the 1 mile encountering various "intriguing distractions" ranging from curious geese, to people on horseback, to large logs laying over the path, to cars honking. Every team has a steward that walks with them for safety and for the protection of the dog.

If the judges determine that the dog/handler team passes every exercise, then the dog earns the St. Bernard Club of America title of Draft Dog and can put the initials of DD on the end of his name. If you have 2 dogs that both have Draft Dog titles, you can enter them as a team to earn a TDD (Team Draft Dog) title. Teams are very impressive and only 3 teams have attempted and passed the test to date.



How to train your dog to back

The following was written by Cheryl Dondino, a member of the Columbia River Newfoundland Club:

Start now to teach your dog the backup, with or without the cart. Anytime you see your dog backing up for any reason which is their choice, see how fast your reflexes are. Give the backup command quickly, followed by praise. See how often you can make this command part of their everyday life, and the job will be that much easier when you put them into the traces of the cart.

Here is another idea that I have had success with. Make two very long traces and attach them to the shoulder rings on each side of the dog's harness. Start with the dog in harness, but without the cart. Position a helper at the end of the traces, behind the dog and instruct the helper not to say anything. As you stand in front of the dog and hold both hands up for the dog to see and give the backup commands, your helper pulls back on the traces in a seesaw motion, first to one side and then the other. Your helper stops pulling backwards when you give the command to stop, followed by your enthusiastic praise. You will be surprised how easily your dog catches on to backing up without sitting down with someone behind pulling back and forth with those side traces. When all is perfection, I add the cart and (make sure the traces are cut initially long enough to get the helper behind the cart comfortably) have the helper repeat the action. Guess what? You can teach the dog to back up straight or a bit to each side, or around a corner merely by having your alert helper back up and pull from side to side in the directions of your raised hands. The dog learns to manage the directions of your hands and verbal commands naturally and without correction (my favorite way!), allowing you to praise for frequent victory. (The only one who gets corrections in this method is the helper if he either speaks to the dog – thus taking the dog's attention off you, or if he doesn't know his right hand from his left and goofs up your directions!). On the other hand, you may owe your helper big time when his or her assistance results in your dog's reliable backup at the next draft test! (This is the time when he or she claims all the credit for YOUR dog's success).

Another trick to teaching the backup is, at feeding time, hold your dog's food bowl over his head and gently step forward into the dog. Give the "back" command. The dog will automatically step backwards to look at his food dish. Then praise him and place his food bowl down. Do this at every feeding time, gradually increasing the number of steps backwards the dog has to take before setting the food reward in front of him. And don't forget the praise!

If you would like a copy of the Rules and Regulations or Working Dog Guidelines, you can obtain them from this website.

Barry Roland is currently the Working Dog Chairman for the SBCA. If you would like to speak with him or others of the Working Dog Committee, they can be contacted at the following phone numbers and e-mail addresses:

Vicki Jo Graves in Washington	(253) 537-0895	Vicdory@MSN.com
Larry and Lynn Jech in Arizona	(623) 936-9120	jech.saints@juno.com
Walt Parsons in California	(925) 934-0775	waltnewf@pacbell.net
Barry Roland in Georgia	(404) 241-1504	excalibursaints@earthlink.net
Dan Wheeler in Utah	(435) 882-8561	sbernard@aros.net