

ASSESSING WORKING QUALITIES IN FINLAND

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With the national breed standard test in Finland having up until now focussed solely on the conformation, a question for the need of a separate test to assess the working qualities of the Rottweiler was raised. A few working Rottweiler enthusiasts got together in the year 2000 and began developing what was initially to become a "drive-test" for the use of the main breed association. Unfortunately, that test got buried in the development process altogether. In the next few years, the basic idea for test was kept alive by Kennel Manouman that concentrated in promoting the working qualities in their Rottweiler breeding. Eventually, the drive-test evolved into an assessment of not only the different drives but also other significant Rottweiler qualities as specified in the breed standard. The purpose of all this was to launch a test designed specifically for the Rottweiler, a test previously never before used in Finland.

Taking the original (German) ZTP into use would have been a far reach because only a few of the Finnish owned Rottweilers were trained for Schutzhund at that time. Also, the fact that the ADRK only registers ZTP scores of ADRK registered Rottweilers hampered the ZTP as such being introduced in Finland. Most working Rottweilers here competed and, in fact, still compete in national working dog trials such as the search, tracking or search and rescue. It is only in the most recent years



that the sport of Schutzhund has become more popular amongst the Finnish Rottweiler people. Nowadays, Schutzhund is becoming growing popular and the number of SchH titled Rottweilers is steadily rising.

With the Rottweiler being one of the oldest working breeds, it seems inconceivable that his working qualities are often utterly overlooked in making of breeding selections. For too many breeders the fact that this breed was originally bred purely for his performance and usefulness seems to have totally been forgotten. The Assessment for Working Qualities was created to produce liable information on the state of the Rottweiler as a working dog today. It evaluates the in-built drives as well as nerve-built, self-assuredness and fearlessness – all genetic qualities that should be taken into consideration in breeding. For the Rottweiler to be assessed it must be at least 2 years old, FCI registered and tattooed or micro-chipped for identification.

The Rottweilers entering the assessment are not required to have any protection or other such training. They are assessed for their natural behaviour, genetic drives and characteristics that a dog will present when given the stimulation for specific drive areas. Many Rottweilers today have issues with lack of courage and fearlessness and curiously enough self-assuredness that the breed is so widely



known for. Courage and self-assurance are both qualities that a big, strong defence-based dog such as the Rottweiler should unquestionably have (in addition to a steady nerve-built) to avoid any unfortunate events that we every once in a while are faced with.

In practise, the assessment is run both in- and outdoors. The dog is first identified and then tested for social behaviour by interaction in a group of people.

The first drive area is prey drive and during this part the dog is given prey stimulants on varying surfaces eg. see-through stairs and slippery floors. In addition the dog's courage is tested in a dark room to which he needs to walk to through a steep staircase. His reaction to different sounds and noises are also evaluated. Then the dog is tested in the defence side by a certified helper and assessed for his ability to respond to threat and to transfer from prey to defence and back to prey. His ability to function under pressure is put to test when a helper touches the dog while he is biting into a pillow or a sleeve. The



final review of the assessed dog is given based on his entire behaviour throughout the test including the in between moves from one place to another.

Finnish Working Rottweiler Club (www.finnishworkingrottweilerclub.com) adopted the Assessment for Working Qualities and has to date organized four tests in which 66 Rottweilers have been tested. This number includes Finnish bred as well as several imported Rottweilers. So far, the testing has been performed by the same two certified helpers, a K-9 officer and multiple Police dog



champion Mikko Nivala and Timo Helynen who has multiple participations in the WUSV WC as Finland team helper. Both also currently handle SchH 3 titled dogs and have been involved in creating a helper program for Rottweiler helpers.

Based on the testing events, so far it can be concluded that most of the Rottweilers tested portray good prey and defence drive actions. Many have a good prey drive but battle with the lack of self-confidence and courage that is concretely seen when the dog is placed on unfamiliar surface or when tested in defence drive.

In their work with the helper, many have weak bites, falling off sleeves, growling insecurely under pressure. Few exhibit very ingratiating behaviour, and have trouble passing through all parts of the test. The few who portray the real Rottweiler character pass through all parts with excellent reviews and are; self-confident, willing to dominate the helper, have balanced drive areas and natural, full and strong grips.

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