
Contents

Foreword.....	vii	The Tubes	60
Acknowledgments.....	ix	Start Box Cones or Markers	62
Introduction	xi	Wickets.....	63
Chapter 1: The History of Ratting and the Start of Barn Hunt.....	13	Summary.....	63
The History of Rat Hunting.....	14	Chapter 5: The Rats and Their Safety.....	65
An Idea Is Born: Hunting <i>without</i> Killing Rats	16	Getting Rats for Barn Hunt.....	67
The First Barn Hunt Association Event.....	18	Rat Husbandry	75
A National Championship	18	Rat Health Concerns.....	77
The Growth of Barn Hunt	18	Handling and Socialization of Barn Hunt Rats.....	79
Chapter 2: Scent and Hunting.....	21	Training a Rat for Barn Hunt.....	81
Hunting with Sight.....	22	Rat Care and Safety at Trials and Practice	85
Hunting with Sound	22	Rat Safety During Dog Introductions	89
Hunting with Smell.....	22	Summary.....	90
Learning About Scent through Our Dogs.....	24	Chapter 6: Entering an Event and Ring Procedure...91	
Differences in Rat Scents	25	Reading the Rules.....	92
Factors Affecting Scent Detection in Barn Hunt.....	26	Registering Your Dog with BHA.....	92
Things that Can Affect Your Dog's Ability to Smell ...	27	Entering a BHA Event.....	93
Does Barn Hunt Affect Other Dog Sports?	27	Sportsmanship in the Game.....	95
Summary.....	27	Controlling Your Dog.....	96
Chapter 3: The Dog and Handler Team	29	It's Trial Day	98
The Barn Hunt Dog.....	31	The Workings of the Barn Hunt Blind	98
Canine Hunting Motivations	35	Entering the Ring and Going to the Start Box.....	101
How Dogs Indicate They Have Found a Rat Tube.....	37	Starting the Run	106
The Barn Hunter Handler	41	Finding Rats.....	108
Junior Handlers in Barn Hunt	46	Calling the Rat.....	111
Differently Abled Handlers in Barn Hunt.....	48	What to Do with the Found Rat Tube	114
Chapter 4: The Ring and Equipment	49	Performing a Tunnel.....	121
The Ring.....	50	The Climbing Element.....	123
The Blind.....	52	Concluding the Run.....	125
Straw/Hay.....	53	Time Penalties	125
Ramps and Boards and Bridges (Oh, My)	55	NQs: Non-Qualifying Actions or "Not Quites"	126
The Instinct Cradle	59	Grounds for Disqualification and Dismissal	126
		Potential Pitfalls for the New Handler	126

Chapter 7: Event Classes, Levels, and Titles	127	Chapter 11: Proofing the Dog's Training.....	231
Regular Classes	128	Proofing for the Contents of the Tube.....	232
Non-Regular Classes.....	143	Proofing for Environment.....	233
Summary.....	146	Proofing for Types of Hides.....	234
Chapter 8: Introducing a Dog to Barn Hunt and Basic Training	147	Proofing for Humans	237
When Can You Start a Puppy?	148	What You Cannot Proof	238
Before You Start Barn Hunt Training.....	149	Summary.....	238
Training Theory in Barn Hunt.....	150	Chapter 12: Running a Licensed Barn Hunt Event .	239
That First Lesson	153	Barn Hunt Sites	240
Introducing the Barn Hunt Ring	157	Holding a Licensed Barn Hunt Event.....	240
Introducing the Climb	158	Tips, Tricks, and Things to Think About When Holding an Event.....	242
Introducing the Tunnel.....	162	The Important People Who Make an Event Happen.....	245
Introducing the Rat.....	166	Summary.....	250
For Dogs that Lack Interest	177	Chapter 13: Safety for Dogs and Humans	251
For Dogs that Mark.....	177	Dog Safety	252
Putting It All Together	178	Human Safety	255
Chapter 9: Advanced Handling, Strategy, and Training	183	Summary.....	256
Handling and Strategy	184	Chapter 14: The Barn Hunt National.....	257
Advanced Training.....	191	Grand National Competition.....	258
Summary.....	202	Games Competition.....	258
Chapter 10: Troubleshooting and Training through Challenges	203	Versatility Competition	260
When Training Is Needed.....	204	Summary.....	260
Indication Problems.....	205	Conclusion	261
Dog Quits Hunting	214	Resources.....	263
Hitting on Litter and Empty Tubes.....	216	Barn Hunt Glossary	265
Dog Will Not Do the Tunnel	221	Our Canine Cast	277
Dog Will Not Come Out of Tunnel	226	About the Authors	279
Distance Challenges and the Dog that Works Too Close.....	227		
Dogs that Consistently Mark or Foul the Course.....	228		
Following the Rat Wrangler	228		
Eating Straw.....	230		
Summary.....	230		

Foreword

I first met Eva Raczka when she came from New York to Purina Farms in Gray Summit, Missouri with her Belgian Tervuren Pi. They were there for the 2015 National, our second Barn Hunt National in what was still a new sport. Pi and Eva did extremely well, earning a gold medal in Versatility, a bronze medal in Games, and finishing 15th overall in the Grand National competition. I was impressed with them as a team. Eva had already started the Central Bark Club in Central Square, New York, which held its first Fun Test in July of 2014 and first trial in October of that same year. I have watched as Eva and her Club have continued to grow and expand and was happy to approve her as official Barn Hunt Judge number 126 in 2015.

Like many early enthusiasts of the sport, Eva has been along for a sometimes bumpy but always fun ride. As I write this foreword, the Barn Hunt Association is celebrating our fifth year. We have come such a long way from our early days. Pi was registered as dog number 4,926 and as this book is published we will pass 33,000 registrations. I am still shocked and awed that my little idea to come up with a sport that would test working ability in vermin-hunting dogs has become so much more than we ever expected it to.

When Eva first approached me about writing a book about the sport, I was thrilled. I don't know Deb Eldredge personally, but I was aware she has written other books (over 15) and is a veterinarian. In my life before Barn Hunt (LBBH), I was a freelance graphic designer and de-

signed quite a few books for Clean Run under my company name of DDGraphix. I have known Clean Run owner Monica Percival since the early 2000s so I knew this book would be in good and capable hands.

Reading this book will be helpful for both beginners and experienced Barn Hunters. Eva and Deb have covered all aspects of the sport from its beginnings through training, ring equipment, how to enter an event, troubleshooting, proofing, and how to set up and run an event. There's a chapter on the importance of treating our working rat companions with the respect they deserve, keeping them safe at all times. The book will give you an excellent overview of the sport from several perspectives so that you get a solid understanding of both the how and the why of it.

At its heart, this sport is still about testing working instinct in vermin hunters, but it has become so much more—a supportive, welcoming, and fun place to take your dog, meet new friends, and have a blast, and a gateway sport for those who have never competed with their dog in anything and who then not only excel in Barn Hunt but go on to try other sports.

The best thing is that the dogs love it. There is nothing more exciting than watching a dog enthusiastically working the bales and pouncing with delight when he has found the right tube. Then seeing the owner light up with joy, praise their dog, and go on with the game. It's addictive, this sport. See you at a Barn Hunt trial!

Robin Nuttall

Founder, Barn Hunt Association LLC



Acknowledgments



© kimnygar D. PICs by kim Pho togr a Phv

The authors would like to thank Robin Nuttall for establishing a sport that is fun, challenging, and addictive. In addition, we are thrilled to have Robin's support for this project as well as her rules review of this book.

Thank you to Monica Percival and Clean Run for seeing our potential as authors for the first book on the sport of Barn Hunt.

Thanks to John and Mary Fowler (Eva's parents). They opened their minds and their Christmas tree farm to the authors for this sport. Without their support, the central New York Barn Hunt scene would not exist.

Thank you to Beth Adams for photographing and capturing key Barn Hunt moments for the book. Her eye and ability to catch key moments is magical!

There are so many dogs that have helped us develop the training methods described in this book. Thank you to each and every one of them.

We would also like to thank all the tireless Barn Hunt judges, volunteers, and workers (including Barn Hunt Secretary extraordinaire Todd Raczka) for offering to help. Proof that many hands make light work as well as fun!



Introduction

Welcome to Barn Hunt, the new canine sport that is sweeping the nation, in which your dog finds rats in PVC tubes on a course made from straw. The uniqueness of the sport typically intrigues people from the first mention in conversation. People begin to think about their pup chasing squirrels or rabbits, and they wonder if their dog would enjoy “crittering” in a more formal setting. Barn Hunt is a sport that combines canine instincts and hunting with strategy and teamwork. Try it once, and you and your dog could be addicted!

Barn Hunt is the fastest growing dog sport to hit North America since dog agility, and it is becoming more popular every day. Registrations continue to increase exponentially at the writing of this book. This is no surprise—it is great fun for people and for dogs! It takes a dog’s natural instinct to find quarry, builds in a requirement for teamwork, and offers plenty of challenge and strategy for both dog and human. In addition, it provides great physical and mental stimulation for your dog.

Teams that practice and work together build stronger bonds and better communication and can develop a real “conversation” that benefits the pair at home and beyond. Barn Hunt also builds confidence in both the human and canine member of the team. This sport is often found by people looking for “jobs” for their dogs, be they older senior dogs that have retired from a vibrant agility career, dogs that love crittering at home, or dogs that are working through social challenges. We see all types and all motivations, with different challenges and different stories.

This sport that seemingly requires “no training” turns out to be an activity that can involve a lot of training, proofing, and perfecting. Initial introductions are often easy, with teams experiencing a high level of success, but as the team progresses, more skills, problem solving, and proofing are needed to succeed.

This book is for those new to the sport as well as for the seasoned Barn Hunt trainer and exhibitor. It is intended to give you an in-depth look at the sport, including how to prepare your dog for trials and work through problems with proofing, drills, and other techniques.

Although we will mention the most recent rules (published April 1, 2016 with several addendums in 2017), this book is not intended to take the place of reading the official rules, because they are assuredly going to change as the sport develops. The most current revision of the Barn Hunt Association rules can be found online at www.barnhunt.com. We attempt to refer to male and female dogs equally throughout the book; both are equally adept at Barn Hunt. We also reference “straw” as our material for course building, but hay is allowed, and you can swap hay in any place the term straw is used.

One caution here: not only is Barn Hunt somewhat addictive, it is often a “gateway” sport. That means trying Barn Hunt may very well lead you and your dog to other dog sports such as Nosework, Agility, Obedience, etc. You have been warned—once you try Barn Hunt, your life will not be the same!

Have fun!

Deb and Eva