



Conditioning Your Terrier for Racing

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Depending on the category where your terrier races, it may run only 2 races during Jack Russell Trial racing or up to 8 races. Those terriers, which place first in one of their races and thus qualifying for a Championship run-off, will run still another race. If a stakes race category is added, this could add another 3 or 4 more races. Throw in the possibility of one or two re-runs for whatever reasons and this adds still more potential times your terrier must run down the 75 yard track at full speed. Add to this, the energy many terriers expend clawing at their cages or jumping up and down in eagerness while waiting to race and it becomes evident that conditioning of racing terriers is very important.

Start by feeding a good quality dog food usually purchased from a high-end pet supply house. A canine in the wild would consume mostly protein, fat and calcium as it eats the small animals or birds it catches although some of these animals/birds may have some partially digested grains in their stomachs or crops. You will almost never see a canine eating corn on the cob, wheat or beet pulp because the canine system evolved with mouth and digestive juices designed to digest animals – not grains. Therefore, it makes sense to look for dog foods where animal by-products (chicken, turkey, lamb, etc.) are listed as the highest percentage ingredients. Note also that dog biscuits are mostly wheat because the gluten in wheat is required to make biscuits hard.

Never let your terrier get overweight. You should be able to feel ribs and back bone easily. General rule-of-thumb is that terriers should weigh about one pound per inch of height at its withers. Usually, smaller female terriers will weigh slightly under this rule and larger male terriers may weigh slightly over this rule. So, regulate the amount your terrier gets each day by the condition of the terrier rather than mfg. recommendations. Obviously, terriers that run all day need more food than terriers that sleep on the couch or in their crates all day.

Exercise is vital to condition terriers for racing. Hopefully your terrier can be loose in your yard a major part of each day. If possible, walk your terriers off-leash in the woods several times each week. If you walk a mile, your terrier will run as many as 5 miles back and forth, digging, exploring and generally having a great time. A mile walk for you terrier on a leash is hardly any exercise at all. Running in the woods is especially good because it also teaches your terrier how to jump hurdles as it leaps over logs, rocks, etc. while running at full speed. If walks in the woods are not practical, then teach your terrier to fetch a ball and throw the ball 40 or 50 times several times each day. If your property has a hill, throw the ball up the hill as this increases the exertion level for the terrier dramatically.

Some people say their terriers swim a lot. This probably keeps terriers in good physical condition, but swimming is probably not the best type of conditioning for racing. Muscles used in swimming are different than required for speed running. Lure coursing in moderation is probably good for conditioning, but too much lure coursing may make for lazy dogs. They rarely ever catch the lure and eventually realize it is a futile effort so start loafing or cutting across.

If you plan on racing your terriers frequently for conditioning, it is recommended that you do this in moderation because too much racing can lead to boredom and make lazy racers. Let racing be an infrequent activity and they will really stay excited.

I hope this article helps you to condition your terriers for racing. On the other side of that coin, I hope not too many of you begin beating my terriers so that I rue the day I ever wrote this article. Just kidding of course.