

# **Building and Operating a Safe Jack Russell Race Track**

By: JRTCA Racing Sub-committee

Over the years much has been written about what is required to make Jack Russell Terrier racing better and safer. These articles have appeared in “True Grit” and many improvements have been made. However, over time we forget and tend to become complacent and this can affect the safety of all involved. Additionally, new people come into the JRT world who may not be privy to the best JRT race track building practices, so it is always prudent to revisit occasionally the core safety concepts in JRT racing. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to make JRT racing as safe as possible for our terriers, handlers and spectators. It is critical that we pay close attention to detail and make certain we are demonstrating due diligence with respect to safety because owners and handlers count on our expertise and steadfast adherence to safe practices. We cannot afford to let them down.

With these thoughts in mind, this racing guide describing how to build and operate a safe JRT race track was prepared by the members of the JRTCA Trial Committee’s Racing Sub-committee. It will present comprehensive step-by-step guidelines for those involved in setting up and running JRT racing. All of us involved in racing from track set-up crews, to racing judges, dog handlers and catchers included should be familiar with the information in this guide and should review it from time to time to refresh our memories. Your terrier’s safety and other terriers’ safety is your responsibility if you are involved at all in racing. If you ever see a situation that neglects the concepts in this guide, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP!!!

## **Race Track Dimensions and Construction**

**Length and width of race-track** -- Tracks must be a minimum of 200-ft. long, although 225-ft. or even longer (up to 300-ft max.) is preferred if space permits. A longer track tends to spread out racers at the finish making it less likely that collisions will occur at the finish barrier and makes it easier to accurately judge finish placements.

At the beginning of the track, another 20-ft. to 30-ft. is needed as a contestant-collection-area for queuing race contestants while waiting for the next race. A minimum of another 30-ft is needed for the catch area behind the finish barrier. If your available land for a race track does not allow for these minimums (at least 250-ft total), you should seek another location. The track should be a minimum of 8-ft. wide; but track width more than 10-ft. is NOT recommended because this creates other track set-up problems. Always run racing up-hill if a slope exists, BUT avoid having a slope from one side of the track to the other as this will make it difficult to control the lure since it will tend to drift to the downhill side.

**Fencing for race-track** -- Fencing used for race-track construction is recommended to be a minimum of 3-ft. high. It is recommended that heavy-duty orange, black or green safety fencing with squares resembling chain link fencing be used. This type of fencing if purchased in 6-ft. wide X 100-ft. long rolls, can be cut with a chain saw or a saws-all

before unrolling initially to get the desired 3-ft. wide fencing. Sometimes this fencing comes in 4 foot widths which means the inside of the track is more difficult to access should there be a fight or confused dog that must be caught -- thus gates may be needed to provide access to inside of track. Please avoid cutting these 4-ft rolls in half to make 2-ft. high fencing because this creates other problems as described in a later paragraph. The cheaper, flat orange safety fencing will work but is prone to tearing and damage; moreover, it is flimsy which can allow dogs to squirm under and escape, and over time has to be replaced so often that it eventually costs more than the stronger fencing.

There undoubtedly are other types of flexible, strong fencing available so just look around in the agricultural and construction safety supply businesses. One possible source of suitable fencing is BF Products, Inc. with locations in Harrisonburg, PA (717) 238- 7715 and Charlotte, NC (704) 617-2212. Try Google under "fencing", "aviary fencing", "safety fencing" or "snow fencing" for other possible types of fencing and outlet sources.

Fencing that is shorter than 3-ft. creates problems with the lure tending to fly out of the track if windy conditions occur or if the lure bounces off jumps in steeplechase races. If possible, use fencing support stakes that are 4-ft. long (½ inch diameter rebar stakes are recommended) that can be driven into the ground deep enough so the top of the rebar is even with or slightly below top of fencing. Rebar stakes can be obtained from a steel supplier or from Home Depot or Lowes type outlets. A 'pounder' made from heavy gauge 2 to 2 ½-inch interior diameter steel pipe with a thick steel cap welded on one end and a handle welded on each side makes driving rebar stakes easy. Hardware or agricultural supply stores often carry such 'pounders' or a local welder can easily make one. Use of step on electric fence posts are hard to do on dry hard packed ground and are not very stable so are not a very good alternative to rebar stakes.

A straight line of fencing at the top with no stakes higher than the fencing will help keep the lure from getting caught or 'snagged' if it flies out of the track. Always place stakes on OUTSIDE of the fencing to make interior of the race track as smooth as possible. When splices are made in the fencing, ALWAYS make ragged edges of the seam point toward finish area so there are no ragged edges of the fence on the inside to possibly gouge an on-coming dog's eye.

Use 'Zip Ties', which are normally used to hold together bundled electrical cables, to tightly secure fencing to the stakes and to make fencing splices. Nine-inch Cable Ties (called Zip-Ties here) are available at Home Depot or Lowes in packages of 1,000. Place the Zip Ties through the fencing and around each fence post in such a way that the pointed ends of the Zip Ties point OUTSIDE the track so no sharp ends are pointing inside the track as they may injure an onrushing dog's eyes. Smooth INSIDE of the track and smooth TOP of the fence helps keep reduce lures that occasionally fly out of the track or get caught on fencing from happening and causing FRUSTRATING RE-RUNS.

Get those orange caps from construction equipment supply houses that are used on construction sites and cover the tops on any rebar in the race- track itself, the collection area, the catch area or the traffic control fencing if these rebar ends are not already

completely covered by the fencing itself. Remember ‘the devil is in the details’ and we are responsible for these little details if we are part of a race track set-up crew.

**Tricks of the trade** – One trick to use in laying out race track fencing is to have 100 yards of yellow nylon rope on a spool with black or gray duck tape markers every 10 feet. Put a rebar stake at the beginning and end of your track location and stretch the rope tight between the two stakes. Then drive a rebar stake at every marker inside the rope so the rope can later be easily be moved outside to make the spectator barrier. Thus your stakes will be every 10-ft. feet which helps to accurately determine the length of the track PLUS gives you an easy indicator for where hurdles will be placed later.

Making a ‘spectator barrier’ alongside one side of the track keeps spectators and dogs at least 6-ft. away from the edge of track during racing. Stakes are driven approximately every 30-ft. to support the ‘spectator barrier’ rope. This barrier also provides a spectator-free lane on one side of race track for dog handlers to use when running to retrieve their terriers after each race and a similar, ‘spectator barrier’ on the other side provides a place to safely store hurdles during the flat races. Use another rope to keep the fencing on the opposite side straight and align these support stakes by eye approximately the same location as on the measured side and then this second rope is moved out and used as the other spectator barrier. The non-handler side where jumps are stored also insures a clear view of the entire track for both Lure Machine Operator and Racing Judge since on the other side used by the handlers, an excited handler may lean over the fencing to encourage their dog and thus block the view by the judge and lure operator.

Make three foot square fence material gates out of 1-inch PVC pipe and fencing that can swivel on a re-bar stake to help catchers enter and exit the catch area and for the lure-runners to easily enter the track near the finish barrier after each race to retrieve the lure back to the start for the next race. Also, use pieces of pink or yellow plastic warning tape to mark the locations for the hurdles to make placement of hurdles for Steeplechase races easy and quick (more about placement of hurdles later)

## **Racing Start Box**

**Start Box Construction** -- No known commercially made JRT Racing start boxes are available, but there are a few individuals willing to construct boxes per order. Contact the JRTCA for the names of any such individuals. Usually each start box must be custom or home made. Boxes can be made of ¾ inch plywood, but the best boxes are made of steel tubing and sheet metal. Design drawings for making a steel tube box are available on the following website: [www.farmcliff.com](http://www.farmcliff.com), ‘Articles’, ‘Organizing Jack Russell Racing’, using a link called ‘See Starting Box Design Drawing’ in the fourth paragraph after photo in that article. Most anyone adept at either welding or carpentry can construct a JRT start-box. However, it is important to insure the dimensions for each start-box compartment closely adhere to what the drawings provide. Boxes must be heavy enough to not jump around or move each time the front release is opened OR they must be anchored with stakes.

It is preferred to have no floor in each of the 6 compartments in a start box so that natural turf provides traction for terriers starting the race. Also, this way there is no drop of an inch or so after the terrier leaves the start box which can cause some racers to stumble. Otherwise, a rough carpet must be glued on the floor of each start box compartment. The main problem with carpet is that dog claws tend to pull up the yarn of the carpet and loose strands must be trimmed periodically to avoid catching the dogs' feet. The best way to open the start box front is by using four storm door pistons when a closing latch is released. Photos on this same website mentioned in the previous paragraph and under 'Racing Start Box Photos' are pictures that illustrate how these pistons are attached and a latching mechanism that works very well.

Some wooden start box designs use a strong wheelbarrow handle affixed to the start box front. However, this requires considerable skill by the person opening the start box. With a wheelbarrow handle opening system, the front latch must be unlatched prior to opening while still holding the front shut by pressing the handle forwards. Then a quick movement pulls the handle back and downward in order to open the front door. This is a complicated set of actions requiring strength to hold the front down briefly while the opener signals for the lure to start moving. Also, the front may not open quickly enough or opens part way prematurely due to excited dogs pressing on the door.

Some box makers prefer to open the box automatically with a button that triggers an electric release switch. This system tends to have a fraction of a second delay between the buzzing sound of the opener and the time that the front actually opens. As a result, some dogs charge forward and ram the front too soon and consequently they must back up to start again so when the box front finally does open, a dog may be backing up and thereby gets a bad start. Thus, the recommended ways to open the box are through the mechanical means described earlier.

Make certain interiors of each compartment are free of any sharp edges or screw points that might injure a dog. The start box front must be made of a safe material. If stamped steel grating is used for the front, always grind off any rough/sharp edges and use a thick coating of paint to avoid sharp edges that will cut dog's feet or break toenails. The grating size must be small enough so dogs cannot grab grating with their teeth and snap off a tooth.

Some experts prefer plexiglass or similar clear sheeting box fronts for safety reasons. BUT, the use of ½ inch wire screen or steel grating on the OUTSIDE of the plexiglass helps the dogs recognize that they cannot leave the box via the visually clear space provided by only plexiglass. If only plexiglass is used on the front, then use black paint or black tape to make stripes on the outside of the plexiglass so dogs will recognize that they cannot exit through the clear plexiglass. MORE IMPORTANTLY, block off the views of the dogs from the TOP 2/3 of the box front with sheet steel or aluminum or painted with black paint on the outside with only the bottom 5 or 6 inches available for dogs to look out down the track.

Some prefer a start box that slants gradually outward a total of 4 or 5 inches to the bottom of the front door. They believe this slant further encourages dogs to stay on all four feet in a crouched position while waiting for the start-box to open. A major recommendation is to make the start box compartments 18-inches tall to accommodate the taller dogs or at least help those who are not used to crouching down. It also helps avoid catching the tails of taller dogs when closing a top load door. Ha!

Some excellent start boxes only have 6-inch round plexiglass or steel grating windows low on the front in each section of the box for the dogs to look out. The important reason for limiting the dogs' view, is to keep them with their front feet on the ground instead of climbing up and scratching the front. If the entire front is clear plexiglass, dogs tend to ram their heads against the clear glass thinking they can leave the box since there is no visible barrier in their minds. The overall objective is to keep dogs crouched on the ground until the front opens. Be very certain the front comes up quickly and does not bounce back down and hit departing dogs on their heads – another reason for a taller box.

**Start box loading** -- Top load boxes are much preferred (see photos mentioned earlier for example of a top load box). Rear load boxes are difficult since dogs can use the ground to balk against loading and it is difficult for some less agile folks to bend over and load their dogs. Top loading is made easy by simply holding both of the dog's front legs with one hand and lowering the dog 'head first' into the box. Always instruct handlers to take their leashes off BEFORE trying to load dogs. The person handling the start box must always be ready to assist anyone having difficulty loading their dog and it goes unsaid that the box handling person must be physically capable of helping load difficult dogs. Quick loading is necessary to avoid already loaded dogs potentially exhausting or even hurting themselves while waiting for other difficult dogs to be loaded.

**Lure placement and start-box opening** -- The lure should be placed a minimum of 6 to 8-ft. in front of the box so dogs in the far outside boxes can see the lure easily. Once the dogs are loaded, the start box handler signals for the lure to start moving. Remember to give that last dog loaded a second or two to 'settle' before signaling and then allow the lure to progress forward another 6-ft. or so before opening the box front. In adult races, the lure machine operator should strive to maintain 10 to 15-ft. between the lure and the lead dog for flat races and a hurdle distance in front for steeplechase races. However, if young puppies are racing, then the start box opener should use the lure to 'tease' the puppies by waving the lure in front of the box before moving back into position to open the start box. For puppies, lure machine operators should strive to keep the lure a little closer to the lead puppy.

## **Hurdles**

**Hurdle Design** -- Safe, well designed hurdles can help racing run smoothly and greatly reduce the possibility of injuries. Foam rubber hurdles are by far the best and safest hurdles to use. Visualize the cross-section of the hurdle as a trapezoid with the base of the trapezoid 9-inches wide and the top of the trapezoid being 4-inches wide centered

exactly over the base and height of the hurdle being 12 to 14-inches per your choice. Make hurdles as long as your track is wide (8-ft. to 10-ft.).

**Hurdle construction** -- Use dense bed foam cut to exact specifications by a foam rubber supplier and then make a cover of tough, nylon impregnated vinyl material commonly used for covers on some open truck trailers, or to cover boats. White is the preferred color although yellow or light beige are satisfactory since most race-tracks are green grass and a light color is easily visible to the dogs. A zipper is installed along full length of the center of the 9-inch base to enable the foam to be inserted inside the finished cover. “D” rings (1 ½ inch or 2-inch rings) are attached to center of the very top and bottom of each end of the hurdles using nylon webbing sewn into top and bottom seams at each end of the hurdles.

Go on-line or search the Yellow Pages under “Boat Covers, Tops and Upholstery” to find someone to make the covers. Large fabric stores or furniture manufacturers are the most likely places to buy the foam unless you are near a large city and can find a foam supplier directly. However, a foam supplier may be a problem because if they only sell wholesale, they usually cannot deal directly with consumers due to local sales tax requirements.

For puppies or seniors, lay the hurdles on their side so the 4-inch width is toward the direction from which the puppies/seniors are approaching which makes about an 8-inch hurdle that even the smallest of puppies can scramble over. Fasten the “D” rings on each end of the 9-inch bottom of hurdle to fencing with a short piece of rope or a zip tie. When puppy/senior races are finished, just stand the hurdles up on the 9-inch base and fasten the top “D” ring to the fence.

If foam hurdles are not possible, the next best alternative is to use 4-inch diameter curtain drain PVC pipes (NEVER heavier water piping) for the hurdles. Use a bungee cord on each end of the hurdle to hold three, 4-inch pipes together in a triangular shape making an 8-inch hurdle. Add three more pipes flat on the ground to make a 12-inch hurdle but bungee these bottom three pipes to the top three. A pipe hurdle is not nearly as safe as a foam hurdle, but is light enough to move readily if a terrier crashes the hurdle. DO NOT make hurdle out of 6-inch pipes in a pyramid shape because the resultant heavier hurdle bundle will be more likely to injure the terrier. Never ever use 6, 8, 10 or 12-inch sewer or water pipes as hurdles.

**Word of caution!** – Sometimes the smarter terriers will start ‘clipping’ the top of each foam hurdle since these hurdles waffle just enough so the terrier doesn’t fall but the terrier gains just that much more speed. This in itself is not bad UNTIL that terrier encounters a different, type of hurdle on a different race track and this ‘clipping’ turns into a cart wheeling fall. One way to help prevent ‘clipping’ is to put a ¾ inch PVC pipe right in the top of the foam hurdle along the 4-inch side to make ‘clipping’ a bit more noticeable to the terrier so they don’t develop that habit. The foam hurdle is still just as flexible and just as safe, but the slightly more rigid top tends to discourage such bad habits.

**Hurdle placement is very important!** -- When a series of jumps are placed for human hurdle races or for horse in-and-out jumps, the hurdles/jumps are ALWAYS uniformly spaced at very exacting, carefully measured distances between the hurdles/jumps. This uniform spacing enables humans and horses to utilize well practiced striding between hurdles/jumps and thus greatly reduce the danger of hitting them.

Although terriers may not require such exacting striding between hurdles, they do seem to fare much better with uniformly spaced hurdles and have far few crashes. The best hurdle spacing is 30-ft. which allows the recommended six (6) hurdles to be used on the desired 225-ft. long track (75 yards), leaving 30 plus feet on each end of the track without hurdles. If a shorter track is all available space permits, then use fewer hurdles but never place the hurdles closer than 30-ft. apart. If fewer than 6 hurdles are all that are available and the track is long, then it is permissible to go up to 40-ft. spacing, but, PLEASE, never vary the selected spacing between hurdles used for regular racing when it is time for championship run offs. Hurdle spacing is easily done if fencing stakes are placed at 10-ft. intervals as was previously suggested. At a guide, place a bit of pink or yellow tape in the fencing during track set-up for pre-measured hurdle locations. Anything less than five (5) hurdles for steeplechase races makes it more of a flat race rather than a true hurdle race. This becomes particularly important if the racing judge wishes to remove half of the hurdles for championship run-offs.

**Very Important!** – For championship runoffs, PLEASE, ALWAYS remove only hurdles at the beginning and/or end of the race track leaving remaining hurdles with the same ‘already learned’ spacing. Keeping the same, between--hurdle spacing for runoffs will reduce the number of crashes that occur when the fastest, most risk taking dogs are running for the championships. If every other hurdle is removed for runoffs, it is just about guaranteed there will be some crashes over the “new” second hurdle given the change in spacing and there will be angry handlers as a result.

## **Finish Barrier**

**Finish Barrier Design** --By far the safest way to make the JRT Racing finish barrier is to use dense bed foam (the same foam as used for hurdles). Usually bed sized pieces of the dense bed foam can be purchased in 78-inch lengths and various widths. The best width is 48-inches (but 54- inches is acceptable) which makes the finish barrier high enough to prevent nearly all attempts by terriers to jump over yet is low enough that even the shortest of racing judges can see over the top. Purchase at least 6-inch thick foam but if available and affordable; 8-inches thick foam is optimal but 4-inch thick foam is overly flexible. Cut a vertical finish hole in what will be the bottom of the barrier in the very center so it is 6-inches wide and AT LEAST 20-inches high.

Go back to the canvas fabricator who made covers for the jumps and ask them to get the same type of nylon reinforced vinyl material in a reasonably light color (BUT A DIFFERENT COLOR FROM THE JUMP COLORS). Make a cover that exactly fits the foam with the finish hole in the center fitted as tightly as is possible. HOWEVER, to repeat, it is important to use a slightly different color (beige or yellow) for the finish

barrier than the color used for the hurdles (which hopefully are white) so when viewed at terrier height along the track, it is obvious that the finish barrier is not just another very high jump. A heavy duty zipper will be required across the entire top of the barrier to enable insertion of the foam into the cover. Velcro can be used, but over time grass and other trash tends to get caught in the Velcro making it hard to keep closed. Install at least 4 “D” rings (1 ½ to 2 inch) along each outer side of the finish barrier. The “D” rings should be spaced evenly down each side with one at the very top and another at the very bottom using nylon webbing sewn very securely into the seam of the sides of the barrier cover since these “D” rings are subjected to lots of stress from terriers hitting the finish barrier and are often the first construction failure.

Using the barrier to measure, drive two 6-ft. long 5/8 inch re-bars or lightning rods securely into the ground (minimum of one foot deep) exactly at the edges of the finish barrier and approximately half way between two 10-ft spaced fence stakes. Be sure to center the barrier on the track and then bend the track fencing on each side inward so it can be attached tightly with ‘Zip Ties’ to the support rods holding the barrier upright. However, you must Slide the “D” rings over the support rods to hold the barrier in place BEFORE attaching the fence to the finish barrier stakes and then continue on with the catch area fence installation. You can stand a small hay bale on end OUTSIDE the fencing held in place with a bungee cord against the finish barrier support rods on each side to visually help keep dogs from trying to go around the barrier where fencing is bent inward. If necessary, stuff towels or crate pads to further reduce a visual space on each side of finish barrier. Continue fencing onward to begin the racing catch area.

**Caution !** -- DO NOT USE ADDITIONAL RE-BARS OR OTHER STAKES TO HOLD THIS BARRIER FIRM. The objective is to make a finish barrier that ‘gives’ easily if a dog collides with the barrier. The 6-inch width of the finish hole will allow one dog to enter easily and even two dogs can pass through the hole together if they simultaneously hit finish hole forcefully enough. However, the flexibility of the barrier will cushion the collision so dogs will either safely bounce back a little bit or will slide through after the first finisher. If absolutely necessary, a short length of rope or bungee can be attached between the support rods at the very top to help support the upright position of the finish barrier.

**DOUBLE CAUTION !!** -- Historically, hay bales have been used for the JRT racing finish barrier. Properly installed, hay bales can be used (very reluctantly though) for the finish barrier **IF CAREFUL PRECAUTIONS ARE TAKEN**. Use smaller, and softer, hay or straw bales for the finish barrier. NEVER USE DENSELY PACKED STRAW BALES OR THE LARGE, VERY HEAVY HAY BALES HELD TOGETHER WITH BALING WIRE. These types of bales are just too heavy and will not move when a dog hits them - especially when stacked three high. It is far better to rebuild the hay bale finish barrier if or when it explodes when several dogs hit it together than to have an injured or dead terrier.

Make the hay bale finish hole at least 20-inches high and 6 to 8-inches wide (a little wider than used with a foam finish barrier because the fuzziness of the hay can make a



6-inch hole seem very narrow). To obtain a 20-inch high finish hole, break up a hay bale and use the flakes on top of the bottom layer of bales and under the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer to raise the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer of hay bales 7 or 8-inches higher. Omit the flakes at the finish hole and you have a much higher hole. "Flakes" are defined as the layers of hay compressed by the hay baler that can be easily separated and these flakes are usually about 4-inches thick. Stack the bottom bales in such a way that the cut hay stems ends are pointing up and down -- NOT TOWARD THE ON-RUSHING DOGS. Cut ends of hay do bad things if jammed into a dog's eyes. Some people even take a large towel or piece of canvas fabric and wrap a cover around the ends of the bales that form the finish opening thus covering the hay that might be sticking out into the finish hole to protect the terriers' eyes. Hold this fabric in place with well placed bungee cords or binder twine.

## **Catch Area Construction and Personnel**

**Catch area is critical !!** -- The catch area behind the finish barrier is THE MOST CRITICAL PART of racing safety. The first recommendation is to NEVER make the catch area with hay or straw bales. Instead, use the same plastic fencing that is used for the track fencing although never use any fencing that is not at least 3-ft. tall. If flimsy fencing is used for the track itself, then invest in a roll of better quality, heavier duty plastic fencing for the catch area. Make the length of the catch area from the finish barrier to the back a MINIMUM of 30-ft.. Make sure that all fence stakes and ends of the 'Zip Ties' are on the outside of the fence – same as with the race track itself. Round the very back of the catch area to avoid corners where fussing dogs can congregate and make it hard for catchers to sort dogs out.

At the very back of the catch area, the best alternative is to use a bed type foam or even softer foam cushion covered completely with a canvas or heavy cloth fabric -- sort of like a long bag with a 3 to 4-inch flat flap at the top. The foam should be 4 to 6-inches thick, 2-ft. high and 8-ft. feet long. Using several grommets along the flat flap of the fabric, hang this cushion from the plastic fencing either using 'Zip Ties', small pieces of cord or key chain type snaps making sure the bottom of the cushion barely touches the ground. Then tear up a soft bale of hay and pile the hay loosely all around back of catch area to further cushion or at least slow down any dog who comes crashing through catch area after the lure.

Another excellent alternative is to use a 2 to 2 1/2-ft. diameter, 8-ft. long tube that is filled with packing popcorn, torn up small pieces of bed foam or the material used to stuff some inexpensive dog toys. This tube is placed across the back of the catch area to make a soft cushion for on rushing dogs. Use several large plastic garbage bags to hold the stuffing material, but then make a tough, canvass fabric cover to contain the garbage bags to protect the garbage bags from becoming punctured. Primary problems with this alternative are finding the stuffing material and then having space available to store and/or transport this rather large tube between usages.

Since dogs tend to plow underneath this round barrier, it is advisable to attach at least a 2-ft wide X 6-ft long flap along the bottom of this barrier extended into the catch area using

Velcro to attach this strip to the bottom of the bag. This helps stop the dogs from diving underneath the barrier following the lure. Also, place a small (not too thick) rug about 4ft square folded with the fold toward the oncoming lure to help prevent the lure string from cutting the fabric of the bag with friction by passing the lure string underneath the rug.

## **Lure Pulling Machines**

**Sources for lure pulling machines** – Two possible sources for complete lure pulling machines and related pulleys, string, spare parts, etc. are Injoy Lure Coursing Equipment ( [www.injoy-1.com](http://www.injoy-1.com) ) and Maple Creek Racing. ( [www.MapleCreekRacing.com](http://www.MapleCreekRacing.com) ). Cost of machine plus pulleys, string, etc. is approximately \$600 from either source. Use deep cell, 12 volt batteries to operate the lure pulling machines. The non-water, slow charge batteries are more expensive but are lighter and less messy to handle. Always have a spare battery or two available or at minimum have jump cables available so a vehicle can be used to supplement batteries losing their charge.

**Installing lure pulling machines** -- It is recommended that the lure-pulling machine be located along the side of the catch area (NOT AT THE VERY BACK). Choose the side opposite where dog handlers will be coming to pick up their dogs. The string should exit the catch area in the back and then use three or four lure coursing pulleys to control the lure string after the string passes out of the very back of catch area so the string curves around the outside of the catch area to a location not far from where lure machine operator is standing. That is where the lure machine is installed. . This location of the lure puller enables the lure operator to check the string spool regularly and hopefully avoid back-lash tangles that occasionally occur on the take-up spool. BUT, more importantly, this arrangement enables the lure operator to ALWAYS position himself outside but alongside the finish barrier no matter the length of the lure machine trigger cord so the lure operator can see the ENTIRE TRACK as well as the ENTIRE CATCH AREA.

It is recommended that the lure trigger switch have a long enough wire to easily reach the finish barrier even if the lure is placed behind the end of catch area if no lure coursing pulleys are available. Some lure pullers are wired with a plug to accommodate an extension cord so any length of switch wire can be achieved.

A couple of hay bales can be laid lengthwise on the lure string coming up the outside of the catch area to help create a drag on the lure string. This drag will help prevent backlashes on the string take-up spool. Make certain the bales are placed with the non-string side down or you may have a pile of hay soon if the lure string saws and cuts the binder twine holding the bales together

If the lure operator cannot see the last part of the track, the tendency is to “goose” the lure toward the end of each race to ensure the lure is not caught. This last second “goose” often sends the lure flying all the way to the back and under the rear part of catch area fencing. The lure operator should ALWAYS strive to stop the lure just few feet from rear of the catch area so first/second place dogs are clear to the rear of the catch area and are less apt to have slower finishing dogs crashing into them.

It is the lure traveling all the way to the back of the catch area and **underneath** the back barrier that can cause major injuries and even death; ESPECIALLY if the back of catch area is made of hay bales. Provisions must be made to cushion impact on the solid bales of hay by a hard charging terrier intent on catching the lure that disappears under the heavy, backstop hay bales. This why the cushions discussed earlier under “Catch Area Construction” are so important. **AND**, this is the primary reason hay bale catch areas are to be avoided if at all possible.

Another concern is that the lure should not be stopped just inside the catch area barely through the finish hole because the lead dogs might stop there and be crashed into by the rest of the terriers. One instance when the lure was stopped early caused the lead dog to overrun the lure and it immediately turn back toward the lure whereby the next dog coming through the finish hole actually collided head-on full speed with the winner. It was a scary moment. Needless to say the job of running the lure is VERY IMPORTANT and all lure perators should practice beforehand and learn how to accurately run the lure.

**Operating lure pulling machine** -- Various trigger devices are used to operate lure machines. Whatever type is used should enable lure machine to be operated by holding the switch in one hand and tapping it against the palm of the other hand. By operating the lure machine this way, an experienced lure machine operator can make the lure move at an even pace. Holding the switch in one hand and pressing the switch with the thumb causes the lure to go in spurts and makes it much more difficult to control the speed of lure down the race track or to stop it where desired in the rear of the catch area. The operator should try to keep the lure 10 to 15-ft ahead of the lead terrier on flat races and one hurdle ahead of lead terrier for hurdle races.

**Catch Pen Catchers** -- The six (6) catchers play a major role in preventing injuries to dogs in the catch area. All catchers must be adults or certainly strong youths no younger than 16 years of age. The catchers not only catch and pick up the terriers, but if properly organized, they play an important role in helping the judge avoid placement errors. Put the two best, quickest and strongest catchers about 5-ft, from the back of the catch area. Their job is to catch the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place terriers and each of these two catchers is assigned one of these two placements. These back catchers should make every effort to stop or at least slow down the two fastest terriers because these are the dogs most likely to injure themselves in a collision with the back of the catch area. The next two catchers are 5-ft or so in front of the rearmost two catchers and are assigned to catch the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place terriers. The weakest or least experienced of the catchers are about 6-ft. behind the finish barrier and catch the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> place terriers if that many terriers are in the race.

The catchers continue holding their terriers or at the very least they hold the colored collars until the judge is satisfied with that race’s results. The catchers should NEVER remove the muzzles from the terriers they are holding but rather hand the terrier to appropriate handler with the muzzle still in place on the terrier. This way no catcher or other terrier is bitten.

The judge determines and records collar colors for placement order. BUT, before radioing in results of that race, the judge, if he/she wishes, may poll the catchers 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> to determine the colors they are holding for their placements. It is only AFTER the judge is totally satisfied are results radioed back to the results board.

## **Miscellaneous**

**Results board** -- A results board is desired to provide a place to attach the day's racing heat sheets and provide a way for Handlers to see racing results. One way to make a results board is using a sheet of ½-inch, 4-ft. by 8-ft. plywood (smooth on one side) installed next to the race track near start box location. Use four, 6-ft. long lightning rods or rebar driven as two pairs about 5-ft. apart parallel to the start end of the race track and slide the plywood between each of the two pairs of rods and stabilize using bungee cords or short lengths of rope. Use a construction stapler with ¼-inch staples to attach the racing heat sheets to results board. Two cinder blocks or blocks of wood may be required underneath the plywood to raise results board high enough for easy access. Most Uni-ball Super Ink pens will write upside down and make recording on the heat sheets easy.

**Race Collection Area** -- To organize racing contestants a small table holds the colored collars and dominos and should be placed near the Results Board. Handlers pass by this table to a collection area made with yellow roping that continues on to make a lane to the finish area that Handlers use to get to the finish of the race track and also serves as one of the 6-ft wide spectator rope barriers alongside the length of both sides of the race track. Attach numbers 1 through 6 to the yellow rope just behind the start box to indicate where Handlers stand waiting to load their terriers for the next race.

**In closing** -- This article was written drawing on years of combined JRT racing experience by members of the JRTCA's racing sub-committee attempting to explain in detail how to make the safest JRT race track possible. These people have built race tracks for many, many trials and fun days over the years and have had few injuries to racing terriers. Safety is of foremost importance in building a JRT race track whether it be for a trial, for an organized fun day or for just backyard practice racing. **Keeping our terriers safe must be our highest priority!!**

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