

Dear Readers,



On 1 January of this year, the new, or revised, Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance came into force. While Section 12 deals specifically with the ban on showing dogs (copied/amputated body parts, especially tails and ears) and the issue of 'defect breeding' (hereditary body parts or organs that are missing, unfit or altered for the use of the species such that pain, suffering or damage occurs), the newly added Subsection 5 in Section 2 has caused a lot of excitement – and is still doing so to some extent.

According to this provision, it is prohibited to use prong collars or other means that are painful for dogs during training, education or exercise. This new regulation has been the subject of controversial discussions all over the country. However, both the arguments of public authorities which keep service dogs and, among other things, the reference to traffic safety obligations and the associated danger of an insufficiently controlled dog have fallen on deaf ears, at least so far, with legislators.

The wording chosen by legislators, which stipulated that in addition to prong collars, other means that are painful for the dogs are also prohibited during training, education or exercise, led to the stick stress test, which is anchored and described in the FCI Test Regulations, also coming into the focus of the authorities.

Therefore, there was uncertainty among members and performance judges as to whether this would be allowed to continue in its previous form or whether doing so in order to implement the Test Regulations would violate the Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance.

After the State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture argued in January that the prohibition of 'other painful means' should cover other means equivalent to the prong collar in addition to the prong collar itself, the stick stress test was initially no longer considered a painful means in training according to Section 2 (5).

While in the following period the topic was discussed controversially, sometimes heatedly, within SV and implementation was handled differently, the SV world waited for binding information from its umbrella organisation, the VDH.

On 14 July 2022, SV was informed that the VDH Board had decided to limit the execution of the stick stress test to mere touching or pushing of the dog with a padded soft stick as of 1 August 2022.

In my opinion, the VDH Board did not position itself clearly enough with regard to the implementation and thus left the member clubs the choice between pushing and mere touching, which in turn led to discussions and uncertainty.

The SV Board has therefore bindingly decided that, with effect from 1 August 2022, no touching or physical stressing of the dog by means of a soft stick may take place within SV during performance tests. Instead, after the dog has gripped the protection sleeve, it is to be stressed with the soft stick in the direction of the withers/shoulders and pushed by the helper. After initial uncertainty about the implementation, this form of stressing by the helper has now become established. Apart from the fact that there is no more direct contact with the soft stick, nothing has changed to date in the way the Schutzhund helper rushes the dog or in terms of the psychological stress on the dog.

This binding regulation was also implemented at the last National Champions' Test. From my point of view it became clear that performance judges are very much able to test the dogs' resilience even without the previous stick stress test.

However, I would like to mention at this point that by eliminating the stick stress test in its previous form, an important parameter for checking the dogs' resilience is lost. As this regulation is not yet implemented in all associations within WUSV, I consider a uniform specification to be necessary. The FCI Test Regulations should also be revised and amended accordingly.

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