Happy Ratters Trial Judges' Briefings

Updated October 2026

Download full rulebook at:
https://happyratters.com/rule-book



General Briefing Highlights

- Dog must enter/exit ring on leash but run “naked’ OR with just a flat buckle or snap collar (no dangling attachments) - put leash in bucket, on ground, carry, or put in pocket
- Time starts when ALL dog’s feet leave start box/line (dog leaves first OR with handler)
- No intentional touching of dog/equipment (except where judge permission rule applies)
- Can treat & use toys in ring (start, rat, B/B, recall) but may NOT use treats to lure
- Can’t push/shove/force dog in/onto burrow or bridge
- Eliminating in ring = NQ & dismissed
- If NQd but not dismissed, judge can show a RAT tube if desired
- Must call RAT before reward dog or touch tube (but OK if pick up before judge confirms)
- If tube is Litter and game allows faults, can remove tube after fault and continue
- Tube removal = Remove/Restrain (4 feet from wrangler)/Redirect (same as Barn Hunt)
- Praise period - after correct call, can touch dog, can pick dog up (if replace same spot)
- Handler can end run with no penalty: stops time and team keeps accumulated points

Faults (typically -10 points)

- False Alert (may keep searching, see games for exceptions)
- Dropping Food
- Luring with food or toy
- Physically assisting dog unless is older/disabled and needs it or gets “stuck”
- Moving items without judge’s permission
- Roughing the rat, i.e., dog picking up, carrying, rolling the tube
    - Rolling rat out of its container or tie-down in Maze/Rat Trap/Road Rage/Village
    - Repeated roughing = NQ
    - **Note**: Biting/scratching at tube is fine, no fault
- Stalling, i.e., handler delaying call while dog is roughing or rolling tube
- Handler picks up tube by end and doesn’t keep level

Faults (typically -10 points)

- Dog chasing Rat Steward (wrangler) or Judge:
  - Lightly jumps on person with friendly manner, no perceived ill intent → judge *may* issue a 5-10-point fault
  - Chases or charges person = 10-point fault
  - Jumps at/on person with perceived ill intent = 20-point fault (host's discretion whether to remove dog from that search and/or remainder of trial)
  - Bites at clothing or person = NQ & removed from that search and remainder of trial
  - Note: follows wrangler a few steps, then returns to hunting at handler's cue is fine

- Dog grabs, bites, shakes, bruises, abrades, or breaks skin of human or dog:
  - Removed from remainder of trial
  - Incident Report Form must be filed with Happy Ratters
  - HR office reviews & makes determination on fitness of dog to continue competing

STANDARD RUNS

Ratter Level

Time: 2:30 Rats: 1 Litter: 1
Empty: 1

Key Facts:

- Tubes may be somewhat visible
- NO moving of items allowed
- 30 second warning before time expires
- Max height of tubes: 1' (if safe)

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; unlimited faults allowed (no minus scores)

Other Penalties: see Faults section

To Q:

- Positive score when time expires

100 points available each run - 300 to title:

- *Rat = 60 points*
- *Burrow = 20 points (can earn one time)*
- *Bridge = 20 points (can earn one time)*
- *No points if no rat found*

Happy Ratter Level

Time: 3:00 Rats: 2 Litter: 2

Key Facts:

- Tubes may be somewhat visible
- NO moving of items allowed
- 30 second warning before time expires
- Max height of tubes: 1’ (if safe)
- Rats at least 6’ apart

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; unlimited faults allowed (no minus scores)

Other Penalties: see Faults section

To Q:

- Find at least one rat, positive score when time expires

100 points available each run - 300 to title:

- *Rats = 40 points each*
- *Burrow = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *Bridge = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *No points if no rat found*

Expert Level

Time: 3:30 Rats: 3 Litter: 2

Key Facts:

- Tubes must be concealed from sight
- One item may be moved with judge's permission
- 30 second warning before time expires
- Max height of tubes: 18" (if safe)
- Rats at least 4' apart

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; max 4 faults allowed

Other Penalties: see Faults section

To Q:

- Find at least one rat, positive score when time expires

100 points available each run - 300 to title:

- *Rats = 20 points each*
- *Burrow = 20 points (can earn one time)*
- *Bridge = 20 points (can earn one time)*
- *No points if no rat found*

Champion Level

Time: 4:00 Rats: 4 Litter: 2

Key Facts:

- Tubes must be concealed from sight
- NO moving of items allowed
- 30 second warning before time expires
- Max height of tubes: 2’ (if safe)
- Rats at least 2’ apart

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; max 3 faults allowed

Other Penalties: see Faults section

To Q:

- Find at least one rat, positive score when time expires

100 points available each run - 300 to title:

- *Rats = 20 points each*
- *Burrow = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *Bridge = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *No points if no rat found*

Extraordinare Level

Time: 4:30 Rats: 1-5, unknown # Litter: 2

Key Facts:

- Tubes must be concealed from sight
- NO moving of items allowed
- NO 30 second warning
- Max height of tubes: 3' (if safe)
- Multiple rats can be in same area
- Calling "Clear" ends play (B&B first!)

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; max 2 faults allowed

Other Penalties: see Faults section

To Q:

- Find at least one rat, positive score when time expires

100+ points available each run - 500 to title:

- *Rats = all rats worth 80 points, value for each varies based on number*
- *Burrow = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *Bridge = 10 points (can earn one time)*
- *No points if no rat found*
- *Bonus for calling "clear" correctly: 30, 50 or 75 points depending on time*

Extreme Level

This is the metallic level for Extraordinaire so almost all rules are the same…

With this one exception:

- NO faults allowed: fault ends run, team keeps points earned

100+ points available each run; to title:

The XREX award is given to the team that accomplishes thirty (30) 100- or 130-point or higher runs at Extreme level, ***after*** earning the REX (Extraordinare) title.

- The REX legs do not count towards the XREX.
- Ten (10) of the 30 must be 110- or 130-point or higher runs.

IDOT Award

Unique to City Sniffers

Awarded to the dog each day with the most Bridges and Burrows performed during the course of a single Standard run

- Doesn't matter if handler directed or dog performs on own
- BUT: only the first Bridge performance & first Burrow performance actually earn points towards titles!
- It's NOT recommended to interrupt your dog's hunting (we already do that in Earn A Rat game) - this award is just for serendipitous fun!

A-Maze-ing Rat

Object of Game:

- Dog demonstrate puzzle solving skills to get to rat

Levels:

- Level 1 = 1 rat (2:00)
- Level 2 = 1 rat, 1 empty (2:30)
- Level 3 = 1 rat, 1 empty, 1 litter (3:00)
- Level 4 = 1 rat, 2 litters (3:30)
- Level 5 = 1 rat, 2 litters, 1 dead end (4:00)

Key Facts:

- X-pens arranged in spiral formation with rat at center
- Judge calls “rat”; can call if dog commits to tube from wrong side of fence
- See level specifics for handler limits/allowances

Faults: no false alerts possible (judge calling!); 1 fault allowed in L1 & L2 (luring with food, rolling rat out, touching dog in maze if directing from perimeter); no faults allowed in L3-L5

Penalties: 10 point fault if tube rolled out of container; no penalty for dog coming out of maze, unlimited restarts within time; NQ if handler enters maze/leaves start box before “rat” call

To Q:

- Find & call rat within time

Qualifying Run earns 100 points towards A-Maze-ing Rat title (300 pts to title at each level)

Box-A-Rat

Object of Game:

- Show dog's ability to find rats hidden in multiple layers of boxes

Key Facts:

- Level 1: 1 rat (2:00), 1 move
- Level 2: 2 rats (2:30), 1 move
- Level 3: 3 rats (3:00), NO moves L3+
- Level 4: 4 rats (3:30)
- Level 5: 1-4 rats (4:00) - bonus points for calling "Clear" correctly
- 30 second warning before time expires (in all but Level 5)
- Allowed hide height increases w/ levels

Faults: two allowed in L1-L2; one allowed in L3-L4; NO faults allowed in L5 → if exceed ends game, team keeps points

Penalties: n/a

To Q:

- Find at least one rat within time (and have positive score)

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults to determine total awarded towards Box-A-Rat title (300 pts to title)

Dump Hunter

Time: 2:00 Rats: 1

Litter: 0

Object of Game:

- Dog hunts independently and works at a distance; handler reads dog at a distance

Key Facts:

- Just 1 rat at all 3 levels, no other tubes
- No bridge or burrow
- 3 levels with increasing distance to rat:
  - Level 1 = 5'
  - Level 2 = 10'
  - Level 3 = 15'
- 30 second warning before time expires

Faults: no faults allowed

Penalties: NQ if handler crosses the start line or leaves the start box before calling "rat"

To Q:

- Find & call rat within time and with handler staying behind line or in start box

Qualifying Run earns 100 points towards Dump Hunter title (300 pts to title at each level)

Earn A Rat

Time: 2:30

Rats: 3

Litter: 0

Object of Game:

- Show teamwork; dog's ability to do a Bridge or Burrow before/while finding rats

Key Facts:

- 3 rats (at least 10' apart); no litter tubes
- Multiple bridge and burrow options
- Performing B or B earns right to hunt a rat
- After rat found, must do another B or B to earn next rat, etc.
- Can move two objects w/ judge permission
- Handler may lead out from start box

Faults: two allowed, third ends game

- After false alert, must do *another* B or B to earn right to hunt again
- Two B/Bs in a row (handler directed) is fault

Penalties: rat found and called followed by rat found and called ends game - team keeps points

To Q:

- Find at least one rat within time (and have positive score)

34 points for each rat found awarded towards Earn A Rat title (300 pts to title)

Infestation

Time: 3:30 Rats: 2-6, unknown #
Litter: 0

Object of Game:

- Dog ability to hunt multiple rats; handler ability to read dog, including when clear

Key Facts:

- Can move two objects w/ judge permission
- No bridge or burrow
- Bonus points if call “Clear” successfully and have no faults (30-75 pt bonus depending on timing)

Faults: one allowed, 2nd ends game

Penalties: n/a

To Q:

- Positive score when time expires

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults or add bonus points to determine total awarded towards Infestation titles

Rat Race

Time: varies, 30 seconds past the last rat found
Rats: 4 Litter: 0

Object of Game:

- Dog finds rats and handler reads dog ***quickly***

Key Facts:

- 35 seconds to find first rat
- After each correct call, time resets so have 30 seconds to find each additional rat

How It Ends:

- Fault
- Run out of time (no penalty) OR
- When all rats found

Faults: ends game, keep points earned

Penalties: n/a

To Q:

- Find at least one rat

25 points for each rat found awarded towards Rat Race title (300 pts to title)

Rat Trap

Object of Game:

- Test dog's ability to find rat in ring full of many tubes (all non-rat tubes are clean/empty, no litter tubes)

Key Facts:

- Level 1: 1 rat, 12-20 total tubes (2:00)
- Level 2: 2 rats, 12-25 total tubes (2:30)
- Level 3: 3 rats, 12-25 total tubes (3:00)
- Level 4: 4 rats, 15-30 total tubes (3:30)
- Level 5: 2-10 rats, 15-30 total tubes (4:00) - bonus points for calling "Clear" correctly
- 30 second warning before time expires (in all but Level 5)
- Can run on or off leash

Faults: two allowed in L1-L3; 1 allowed in L4, none allowed in L5

Penalties: 10 point fault if tube rolled out of container

To Q:

- Find at least one rat within time (and have positive score)

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults to determine total awarded towards Rat Trap title (300 pts to title)

Road Rage Rats

Object of Game:

- Show dog's ability to find rats in a wheeled toy vehicle, wagon, dolly, or cart where every item has a VISIBLE tube (all non-rat tubes are clean/empty, no litter tubes)

Key Facts:

- Level 1: 1 rat, 10-12 total items (2:30)
- Level 2: 2 rats, 12-15 total items (3:00)
- Level 3: 3 rats, 14-17 total items (3:30)
- Level 4: 4 rats, 17-20 total items (4:00)
- Level 5: 1-5 rats, 17-20 total items (4:30) - bonus points for calling "Clear" correctly
- 30 second warning before time expires (in all but Level 5)

Faults: two allowed in L1; 1 allowed in L2-L3; none allowed in L4-L5

Penalties: 10 point fault if tube rolled out of tie-down or container

To Q:

- Find at least one rat within time (and have positive score)

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults to determine total awarded towards Road Rage Rat title (300 pts to title)

Silent Hunt

Object of Game:

- Show dog's ability to find rat/s without handler motion or verbal assistance (handler focuses on observing)

Levels:

- Level 1 = 1 rat (2:00)
- Level 2 = 2 rats (3:00)
- Level 3 = 3 rats (3:30)

Key Facts:

- No litter tubes, bridge or burrow
- Judge calls "Rat"
- Handler must remain "perfectly still & silent" after releasing/cuing dog
- Keep points accumulated when game ends

Faults: no false alerts possible (judge calling!); if Handler calls "Rat":

- 10 point fault (L1 only)
- Ends game in L2 & L3

Penalties: handler moves/speaks when not allowed, game ends but keep points accumulated

To Q:

- Dog finds rat; handler does not move/speak (except if call "Rat" in L1 as stated above)

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults to determine total awarded towards Silent Hunt title (300 pts to title)

Ultimate Distance

Time: 2:00

Rats: 1

Litter: 0

Object of Game:

- Dog hunts independently and works at a distance *while handler sits in chair*

Key Facts:

- Just 1 rat at all 3 levels: not visible but not buried deeply
- No bridge or burrow
- 3 levels with increasing distance to rat:
  - Level 1 = 5'
  - Level 2 = 10'
  - Level 3 = 15'
- 30 second warning before time expires

Faults: no faults allowed

Penalties: n/a

To Q:

- Find & call rat within time and with handler staying in chair

Qualifying Run earns 100 points towards Ultimate Distance title (300 pts to title at each level)

Village Rats **new game**

Object of Game:

- Show dog's ability to differentiate clean vs. rat tubes in course created entirely of pop-up fabric play tents and plastic playhouses (all non-rat tubes are clean/empty, no litter tubes)

Key Facts:

- Level 1: 1 rat, 2 clean tubes, 5-6 houses (2:30)
- Level 2: 2 rats, 2 clean tubes, 6-7 houses (3:00)
- Level 3: 3 rats, 3 clean tubes, 7-8 houses (3:30)
- Level 4: 4 rats, 4 clean tubes, 8-9 houses (4:00)
- Level 5: 1-5 rats, 4 clean tubes, 9-10+ houses (4:30) - bonus points for calling "Clear" correctly
- 30 second warning before time expires (in all

Faults: two allowed in L1-L2; 1 allowed in L3-L4, none allowed in L5

Penalties: 10 point fault if tube rolled out of container

To Q:

- Find at least one rat within time (and have positive score)

100 points available per run, divided by # of rats; subtract faults to determine total awarded towards Village Rats title (300 pts to title)

Double Dutch

Object of Game:

- To challenge the dog's ability to work individually with another dog in the ring honoring, and to watch from the sidelines while another team hunts.

Levels:

- Level 1 = 2 rats (2:00)
- Level 2 = 4 rats (4:00)

Key Facts:

- No litter tubes, bridge or burrow
- 30 second warning before time expires
- Keep points accumulated when game ends - both teams get same number of points

Faults: -10 points for each false alert; unlimited faults allowed (no minus scores)

Penalties: 25-point deduction if one dog doesn't find a rat (all rats are found by other dog)

To Q:

- Find at least one rat, positive score when time expires

100 points available each run - 300 to title:

- *Rats = 50 points each*

Rat Scoring/Staging Clarifications

At All Levels:

- A judge may allow a find, if dog shows a change of behavior, handler calls rat and dog is not right on top of the rat.
- The handler may point to where a rat has been found by the dog previously, but not called by the handler and receive credit for the rat. The dog does not need to “re-find” the rat.

Extraordinaire & Extreme Classes Staging:

Depending on the physical set up of the facility, teams can wait outside, or in another room, where they can't hear how many rats are found. If there is no way to isolate the competitors, the judge may change the number of rats for each run.

If Extraordinaire teams can be isolated and not hear the number of rats found, the judge may use the same number of rats for each group of competitors or change for each person as above.