

# Aptitude testing and the DMA assessment in the Western Cape

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After a rather strenuous and very stimulating 10 day course divided between the classroom and activity in the field, the APT (Aptitude) and DMA (Dog Mentality Assessment) testing has finally arrived in the Western Cape. Ten new Aspirant Judges completed the course and they will now be available to perform the evaluations under a Test Leader pending confirmation of their results and approval from KUSA.

**T**hese Judges have been trained to evaluate the dog's performance in respect of the dog's inherited natural drives and instincts. That is: can the dog actually think for himself if subjected to threats or problem solving, as opposed to having his owner think for him and direct him accordingly.

The APT and DMA are divided within age restrictions with the DMA preceding the APT. Ideally the DMA should be done on the young dog at approximately 18 months of age, while the APT can be done after two years of age with 3 years being the recommended optimum. It is recommended that the elderly dog not be tasked as the stress induced situations may be too overwhelming.

Either test can be done with or without the other.

The DMA is divided into nine sections while the APT consists of eleven sections all consisting of appropriate activities:

These include the following:

- Willingness to contact socially - Play and physical contact and response to humans interpreted as pack bonding and pack interaction (DMA and APT)
- Drive to hunt - The dog's response to stimuli to pursue and catch prey (DMA and APT)
- Attachment to pack leader - Loyalty and attachment to the human pack leader (APT)
- Activity level of the dog in a sterile environment (DMA)
- Distance play when the owner is not present (DMA)
- Attachment to pack leader with surprise - Reaction to unknown or sudden noises (DMA and APT)
- Visual Surprise - Social Fighting Behaviour or a response to a challenge (APT)
- Sensitivity to noise (APT)
- Social Fighting spirit- reaction to abnormal stimuli (APT)
- Dominance (APT)
- Defensive behaviour (DMA and APT)
- Steadiness to gunshot (DMA and APT)

Although very different from the Breed Show ring or any of the other associated competitive activities, DMA and APT are



*The Class of 2011*



*Take Five*



something that all owners or breeders should look to as any breed of dog can participate and not just perhaps the physically superior dogs as seen in the Breed Show ring. More importantly it allows breeders to breed with mentally sound stock.

There was a range of dogs tested and APT Certificates were awarded by the Test Leaders with the Rottweiler Chantely Futures Luv of Liberlumar, ZA003906B09, owned by Lulu Maree achieving the best score. Three Boxers also achieved APT status along with a GSD and a Border Collie Cross. One young Boxer was awarded a DMA.

The course was presented by Mike Eisler and Edith Gallant both from Kwa – Zulu and was held under the auspices of the APT Sub – Committee of the Dobermann Club of the Cape of whom Willem Nel is the Chairman and who can be contacted for further details at 0827113346



*Test leader Mike Eisler with Boxer*

*Photo by Monique Hodgkinson*



*Sarah Gee and her dog*



*Willem Nel and Zelda 'working the soldiers' in one of the dummy runs*

