



WORLD HOOPERS OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

Regulations



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1. INTRODUCTION

Hoopers is a canine sport aimed at showcasing the highest level of collaboration, communication, and confidence over longer distances between human and dog. The **World Hoopers Open Championship (WHOC)** was created with the intent of giving all types of dogs the opportunity to compete on an international stage dedicated to hoopers. The WHOC will adhere to the following regulations, outlining the rules for participating in the event. The primary objective is the protection of the dog's health, handlers, and all participants in this global event. Organizers of each edition commit to ensuring adequate competition spaces, proper distances between equipment, and a competition surface in line with international standards.

The championships are governed by the WHOC rules as stated below, the official language is English.

2. WHOC ADMISSION

1. Each National Team entry must come from one National Team Manager only. Candidates wishing to be recognized as National Team Manager should contact info@whoc.dog.
National Team Managers are recognized for one edition of WHOC only, new applications must be sent for each consecutive edition.
The list of recognised and candidate National Team Managers for WHOC 2026 is published on the website whoc.dog.
2. The National Team Manager is responsible for writing a document that explains how people in the country can become members of the WHOC National Team. Each country's team selection process must be non-discriminatory with regard to both handlers and dogs, and must be approved by the WHOC organising committee. The approved selection processes will be published on whoc.dog
3. For the Individual Championships, each participating nation can enter a maximum of 20 participants. Champions of the previous edition are not included in this quota, they can participate as an additional entry for their country's team in the height category for which the champion's title was earned.
4. For the Team Championships, each nation can enter one team for each height category. Each team will consist of maximum 4 participants plus one reserve, selected from the participants that are registered for the Individual Championships too.



5. The entry form will be provided by the WHOC organisation and must be completed before June 15, 2026. Only one entry form must be completed per nation.
6. The registration fee for WHOC 2026 is € 90.00 per participant of the Individual Championships. and € 200.00 per team in the Team Championships.
7. Along with the entry form, a proof of payment of all due fees must be sent. The registration fees are not refundable.
8. The WHOC organising committee reserves the right to invite eligible combinations by offering a Wild Card. Wild Cards will not represent any country, they will participate as a private individual.
9. During WHOC 2026 also an International Open Hooper Cup will be held. Participation is open for everybody, not only for members of the WHOC National Teams.
The entry fee is € 20.00 for participating members of a WHOC National Team.
The entry fee is € 25.00 for all other participants.
10. For any questions regarding the WHOC 2026 event and information on this regulation, please contact info@whoc.dog.

3. DOG

1. All types of dogs that are microchipped, healthy, trained and over 15 months are eligible to participate.
2. Pregnant or lactating dogs will not be admitted
3. Dogs in heat are allowed to compete. The Team Leader is responsible for informing the competition organization about dogs in heat.
4. Dogs affected by infectious or contagious diseases, or exposed to such diseases within 21 days prior to the event, injured, lame, recovering from surgery, showing mobility difficulties, or exhibiting aggressive behavior toward people or other dogs will not be admitted.

5. Dogs using orthopedic supports or wheelchairs can be admitted only if they hold an official veterinary certificate of fitness specifically authorizing participation in Hoopers competitions.
6. Dogs must be vaccinated according to the legislation where WHOC is organised.
7. No dog will be allowed to compete unless it is officially registered in the WHOC list of participants.

4. HANDLERS

1. WHOC is open to all individuals, without discrimination, provided they recognize and respect the rules of WHOC.
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2. The handler must be a citizen or long-term resident of the country they will represent.
3. Handlers aged 15 years and over are eligible to participate.
4. Participants are obligated to show absolute respect for dogs, handlers and everybody else at the event. Failure to do so may result in expulsion from the event.
5. The handler (or the caretaker) will be held responsible for all damage done by their dog.
6. While all necessary precautions are taken, WHOC and the event organizers can not be held responsible for the loss of dogs, damage or injury caused to dogs or individuals and/or companions, and loss of personal belongings during the event.

5. HEIGHT CATEGORY

1. The height categories are determined by the height at the withers:
 - Category 'S' (Small): dogs with a height at the withers of less than 43 cm;
 - Category 'L' (Large) dogs with a height at the withers equal or greater than 43 cm

2. All dogs entered in the category Small will be measured by a measuring official at the event. If a dog is measured to be over height, he will be excluded from competing in the height category entered. The dog may be moved up to a higher height division if desired.

6. RING AND COURSE PARAMETERS

1. The competition ring will be a rectangular area of no less than 1500 m², with the shortest side of no less than 30 m. (minimum area 30 X 50).
2. The exact measurements of the competition ring, as well as the layout of the entrances, must be communicated to the Judge in advance to facilitate the design of the course, considering appropriate distances between the obstacles and any perimeter fencing.
3. The surface of the competition ring must be horizontal, even, flat, free of holes or irregularities that could compromise the movement of the dog. In addition, the surface must ensure good grip for both handler and dogs (artificial grass, natural grass or sand).
4. During the competition, there must be no materials or obstacle inside the competition ring (for example, unused equipment stored at the back of the ring)
5. Course parameters:

NUMBER OF OBSTACLES	DISTANCE BETWEEN OBSTACLES	MCT (Maximum Course Time)	MOST DISTANT OBSTACLE FROM DHA
15-22	S: 7 - 10 m L: 10 - 15 m	90 seconds	18<DHA<25

7. EQUIPMENT

1. Basic equipment set for WHOC courses: 20 hoops, 4 gates, 6 barrels, 4 tunnels.

2. A series of numbers, from 1 to 22, to indicate the sequence of the course and 3 letters to indicate the sequence of the wave.
3. Automatic timing system with photocells.

7.1 Hoop

Hoops are made of lightweight material but must remain intact in the event of an accidental impact. The upright elements must have a circular section, smooth and free of sharp edges, so as not to injure the dog in the event of an impact. Hoops are colored to be easily distinguishable in the surrounding environment. This obstacle must never be anchored to the ground but must be able to move easily in the event of an impact. There must not be a ground connection between the two sides of the hoop

Measures:

- Width: 80 cm – 90 cm
- Height: 90 cm – 110 cm
- Sides: 40cm – 50cm
- Supports: 30cm – 40cm
- Frame diameter: 2.5cm – 3.5cm

7.2 Gate

Gates are made of lightweight material but must remain intact in the event of an accidental impact. All components have a circular section, are smooth and have no sharp edges so as not to injure the dog in the event of an impact. The filling (uniform color) must allow constant visual contact between the dog and the handler.

Measures:

- Width: 120cm – 130cm
- Height: 80cm – 90cm
- Supports: 35cm – 40cm

The dog must pass the gate at the opposite side of the position of the number posted on the gate.

7.3 Barrel

The barrels must be flexible and have colors that allow them to be easily identified by the dog. Colored stripes (different from the body color) can be applied transversally to facilitate recognition. They must not be anchored to the ground but kept stable using sandbags or similar solutions that do not alter the circular shape of the obstacle and do not constitute obstacles or dangers for the dog.

Measures:

- Diameter: 50 cm – 70 cm
- Height: 55 cm – 100 cm

The dog must initiate the passing of the barrel on the opposite side of the position of the number posted on the barrel.

7.4 Tunnel

Only one type of tunnel is allowed: the **U-shaped tunnels**. They must be rigid and bottomless. They must not be anchored to the ground or held in place with straps or heavy sandbags. They should have sufficient mass to remain stationary in normal wind conditions but not to resist being struck by a dog.

Measures:

- Diameter : 80 cm
- Length : 100 cm

7.5 Distance Handling Area (DHA)

The Distance Handling Area (DHA) is a circle with a diameter of 2 meters for all Classes. The DHA is delimited by a raised edge (2 cm to 4 cm in diameter) that allows the handler to clearly perceive any crossing. It must not deform in the event of impact or trampling by the handler. The position of the DHA is decided by the judge on each course. The DHA circle may be anchored to the surface.

8. ADVANCED CONFIGURATIONS

1. **WAVE:** This is a sequence of three hoops aligned perpendicular to the crossing direction. The wave is considered a single obstacle that the dog must perform, undulating, from beginning to end. The beginning is indicated with the number of the obstacle sequence in the course. Additionally the beginning may be indicated with the letter A, the central hoop with the letter B and the end with the letter C. The distance between the hoops is 5 m for the small category and 7 m for the large category. When positioning the wave in a course, the judge will make sure to leave an adequate distance from the outer perimeter of the competition ring and from other obstacles in the course. The two outer hoops of the wave may be used for additional passages during the course. This is not permitted for the central hoop, which remains for exclusive use in this wave

2. **INSIDE PASSAGE OF BARREL AND GATE :** The position of the number will indicate if the dog has to pass the obstacle on respectively the outside or the inside of the barrel and gate.

9. COURSE LAYOUT AND TRIAL PROCEDURE

1. The judge designs the competition course with the aim of ensuring that the dog can complete it in a harmonious and fluid way, avoiding dangerous discontinuities or incongruous sequences.

2. To ensure accurate timing of the course, the first and last obstacle must always be hoops.

3. The starting and finishing hoops can never be used for intermediate course passages.

4. Before the start of the runs, the judge can invite the handlers to attend a briefing, the purpose of which is to remind them of the rules of the runs and to provide any clarifications regarding the course. At the end of the briefing, the judge starts the coursewalk. For the same height category, a separate coursewalk session will be scheduled in groups of maximum 15 handlers. After the coursewalk, the participants will perform their run according to the published starting order.

5. When entering the ring, the dog may be kept on a leash until positioned at the start. The handler must leave any leash at the starting point before moving towards the distance handling area (DHA).
The dog must not wear any item (fixed collar, harness, flea collar, bandana, etc.) from the moment the handler starts moving towards the DHA until the participant (dog and handler) are leaving the ring
6. Once left at the starting point, the dog can wait in for the start of the run in any position. (stand, sit, lay down, ...)
7. Only the handler is allowed to give commands. Any command or interaction from outside the ring is strictly prohibited.
8. A "false start" occurs when the dog crosses the plane line of the first obstacle (either correctly or at the sides) while the Handler is not yet inside the DHA. In case of a false start, the Handler must correctly reposition the dog at the start. Up to two repositioning attempts are allowed, with a Maximum Repositioning Time (MRT) of 1 minute. A penalty is assigned for each repositioning attempt. A third false start or exceeding the MRT will result in disqualification.
9. Once inside the DHA, the handler cannot leave it (under penalty of disqualification) until the end of the run.
10. Once the handler is inside the DHA, the dog may start. The handler may guide the dog in completing the course using vocal and/or gestural signals.
11. When the handler is inside the DHA and the dog crosses the plane line of the first obstacle in the correct direction, either by passing through it correctly or passing next to it, the run is considered started, course-time measuring starts. The first hoop must always be performed correctly. In the event that the dog crosses the plane line of the first hoop by avoiding or going around it, while the handler is inside the DHA, the handler should reposition or send the dog at a distance (without leaving the DHA) through the first hoop in the correct direction, provided that this does not cause, in the judge's opinion, a situation of significant stress for the dog and, in any case, until the Maximum Course Time (MCT) is reached.
12. The dog must perform each obstacle of the course in the order and direction indicated by the placed numbers. Numbers will be placed on the appropriate side of the obstacle to indicate the direction the obstacle should be taken.

13. Knocking down or moving an obstacle by the dog, if the same obstacle appears again later in the course sequence, results in disqualification.
14. If the dog skips one or more obstacles in the numbered sequence and performs a subsequent obstacle in the numbered order correctly, it should not go back and perform any of the previously discarded obstacles, but should continue to the next obstacle in the numbered order.
A penalty is given for each skipped obstacle.
(for example: if the dog correctly performs obstacles No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3, but continues with obstacle No. 8, then obstacle Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7 are considered skipped, each with its own penalty, and the dog should continue from obstacle No. 9)
15. When the dog passes through only the central hoop of the wave (B), the obstacle is not considered taken, it does not result in any penalty. If however the dog passes through the first (A) or third (C) hoop, or passes the plane line, it is judged in the same way as the rules for a single hoop.
16. Obstacles that are taken out of sequence, already performed by the dog, or preceding in the sequence, while returning to the correct course do not incur a direct penalty, but only result in a loss of time.
17. Taking an obstacle in the upcoming sequence in the opposite direction to that indicated by the numbering, results in a penalty.
18. The dog's performance on the course must be smooth and harmonious. The handler is allowed to redirect the dog to an obstacle up to a total of three attempts throughout the entire course, across all obstacles.
19. Performing the last hoop correctly and within the MCT will end the run and stop the course-time measuring
20. When the Maximum Course Time (MCT) is reached, the judge will signal the end of the run, and the handler must recall the dog immediately.
21. In the event of disqualification, at the Judge's discretion, the team may be asked to leave the ring immediately
22. It is permitted to reward the dog with food or a toy only outside the competition ring.
23. The judge's decision is final and is not disputable.



10. STARTING ORDER

1. Individual Round:

- a.** For Run 1 the starting order is decided by the WHOC organisation. Handlers with more than one dog in one round will be assigned reasonable time between two runs.
- b.** Run 2 will be in the reversed ranking order of Run 1. Handlers with more than one dog in one round will be assigned reasonable time between two runs.

2. Team Round:

- a.** For Run 1 the running order of the countries is decided by the WHOC organisation.
For Run 2 the running order of the countries is the reversed ranking order of Run 1
- b.** The running order of the participants within the team is in sequence of the dorsal number by default. Until 5 minutes after the coursewalk of the respective group, the Team Leader can hand in another running order at the secretary.

11. SCORING

1. All participants start from 200 initial points for each run (200 points for RUN 1 and 200 points for RUN 2). .

2. Penalties: Each fault results in a deduction from the initial score according to the following:

10 point penalty

- a.** To knock down any obstacle.
- b.** Skipping an obstacle during the course
- c.** Skipping one or more hoops inside the wave.
- d.** Taking a sequential obstacle in the opposite direction. (except the last hoops for which specific rules apply).
- e.** Repositioning the dog at the start after it has crossed the start line and before the handler has entered the DHA



- f. Repositioning the dog at the start from a distance after it has crossed the start line besides the obstacle with the handler already positioned inside the DHA
- g. Stepping outside the DHA with one foot for the first time.

3. Disqualification:

The participant will be disqualified when:

- a. The dog wears a collar or any other object during the run.
- b. The handler rewards the dog inside the competition ring with a toy or food..
- c. The handler intentionally touches the dog.
- d. The handler carries food into the competition ring;
- e. The handler holds a leash, food toy or any other item in his hand, pocket or any other way.
- f. The handler repositions the dog at the start, for the third time, before the handler has entered the DHA
- g. The handler begins the run before the whistle (or other signal agreed upon at the briefing) of the Judge.
- h. The handler exits the DHA with both feet.
- i. The handler steps out of the DHA with one foot for the second time.
- j. The handler addresses the judge with inappropriate language and behavior.
- k. The handler addresses the dog with inappropriate verbal or physical attitudes.
- l. The dog barks aggressively.
- m. The dog fouls the competition ring.
- n. The dog shows aggression.
- o. The dog is out of control.
- p. The handler redirects the dog to an obstacle for the fourth time (even if not consecutive)

- q. The dog crosses the first obstacle in any direction, after having already performed it correctly at the start, or performs the last obstacle in the opposite direction
- r. The dog crosses the first obstacle while the handler is still outside the DHA without being repositioned at the start before the handler enters the DHA
- s. The dog does not perform the first obstacle correctly but continues and performs another obstacle in any direction.
- t. The dog accumulates 6 skipped obstacles, even if not consecutive
- u. The dog knocks down or moves an obstacle that should be performed again later in the course.
- v. Maximum Course Time (MCT) is reached;
- w. Maximum Repositioning Time (MRT) is reached;
- x. The handler or dog moves the DHA circle

In case of disqualification and at the judge's discretion, the participant may still complete the course until the MCT is reached.

4. Scoring Team rounds

The best 3 results of the Team members will be combined to determine the Team result.

12. DETERMINATION OF RESULTS AND AWARDS

- 1. The Individual winner and the Team winner will be determined by the combined results of RUN 1 and RUN 2
The sorting order for the ranking will be:
 - 1: Sum participated runs: descending order.
 - 2: ties: Sum eliminations: ascending order.
 - 3: ties: Sum points: descending order
 - 4: ties: Sum coursetimes: ascending order
- 2. The winner will receive the following titles:
 - a. WHOC World Champion Large
 - b. WHOC World Champion Small
 - c. WHOC World Champion TEAM Large
 - d. WHOC World Champion TEAM Small



3. Medals will be awarded to the top three finishers in each Round. The combined winners will receive special medal.
4. For team competitions, prizes shall be awarded considering a minimum of 4 team members plus 1 reserve

13. VETERINARY CHECK

1. Each dog will undergo a veterinary check before the start of the official trials.
2. Check the validity of the passport and/or veterinary certificate.
3. All vaccinations must be recorded on the passport and/or veterinary certificate.
4. Rabies vaccination certificates will be checked.
5. Microchip check.
6. The minimum age to participate in the event is 15 months.
7. Pregnant and lactating dogs will not be admitted, as well as dogs not in suitable health conditions for participation.

14. STAFF

The following staff and functions are required:

1. Event judges: 2.
2. Assistant Judge who will record the score during the run.
3. Timekeeper for the automatic timing system with photocells.
4. Additional timekeeper for the manual manual backup course time.
5. DHA observer who will monitor and judge the handler's movement towards and in the DHA, verify and judge if the MRP is reached.
6. Assistant to verify and make sure all obstacles are in the correct position for the next 15 participants.
7. Assistant to move the leashes from start to finish.
8. Steward to call the next participants into the ring and pre-ring.
9. Secretary staff to process the scores and results.
10. Operator of VAR equipment



15. DISPUTES

1. In the event of a dispute, the English version of these rules shall prevail.
2. In the event where these rules are not clear, the decision of the WHOC organising committee is final.