



BMDCA Info Series

Bernese Mountain Dogs & Fast CAT®

2023 #28

Looking for fun? ► Does your Berner love to run? Does your dog fly like the wind? Do you know there's an AKC sport that only requires a dog's natural instincts to compete? If you and your Berner are looking for fun, AKC Fast CAT® might be for you.

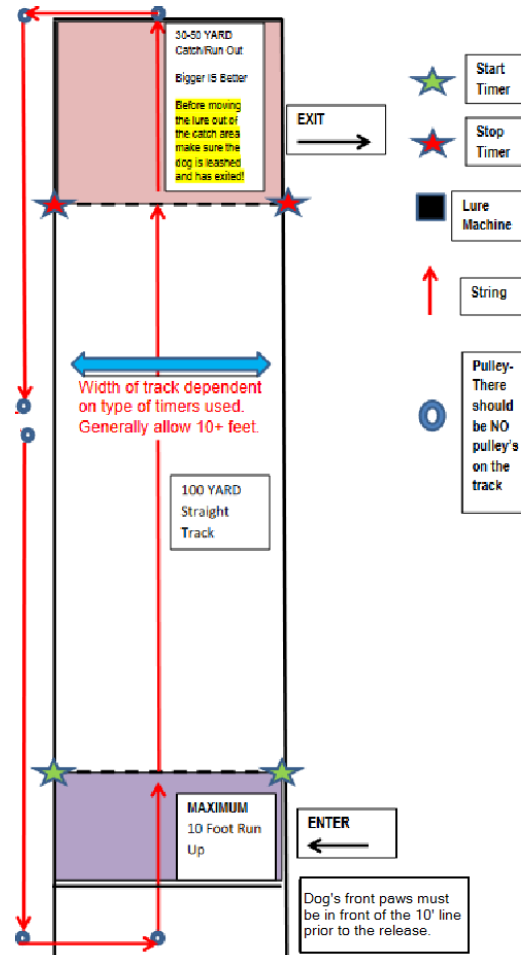
What is it? ► "Fast CAT, which stands for Coursing Ability Test, is a timed 100-yard dash where dogs run one at a time, chasing a lure. It's over before you know it and it's nothing short of awe-inspiring to watch your dog run at top speed, ears back, eyes focused, legs strong."* It's a relatively new event that has become wildly popular and offers those interested in AKC sports a wonderful and easy entry starting point.

How does it work? ► Fast CAT is a timed, straight race of 100 yards. Running individually, the dog's time to complete the 100 yard dash is converted to miles per hour (MPH). A handicap system is applied to the dog's MPH to determine the number of points earned. The handicap system is based on the dog's height at its withers. There are three height categories and corresponding handicaps:

- 18" or greater: handicap is 1.0
- 12" up to less than 18": handicap is 1.5
- Below 12": handicap is 2.0
- Points earned = MPH multiplied by the dog's handicap



How is a Fast CAT track set up? ►



Two handlers are required for the dog's run. A "sender" releases the dog. The dog and sender are in the 10-foot run up area behind the start line. The dog's front paws must be in front of the 10-foot line. The second handler is the "catcher" and retrieves the dog from the run out area.

Does Fast CAT offer titles? ► Yes, and they are earned at designated point achievement milestones:

- BCAT = 150 points
- DCAT = 500 points
- FCAT = 1,000 points
- FCAT# = every additional 500 points

What dogs are eligible? ► To participate in FAST CAT your dog must be at least one year old and have an AKC number from one of the following:

For more information, please visit our website at www.bmdca.org.

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- [AKC Registration](#) as one of the AKC recognized breeds.
- [AKC Canine Partners](#), which is for mixed-breed dogs and dogs ineligible for AKC registration.
- [Purebred Alternative Listing \(PAL\) program](#), which is for purebred dogs that cannot be fully registered with the AKC to participate in AKC events.
- [Foundation Stock Service® \(FSS\)](#), which is for recorded breeds on the road to full AKC recognition.

Also eligible to compete are spayed and neutered dogs and dogs with limited or conditional registration. Females in season are not eligible to participate.

What's important safety-wise? ► Safety

considerations for you and your dog are paramount. Factors to consider include but are not limited to:

- Your dog's general health and physical condition: Is your Berner up to this level of physical exertion?
- Weather: Temperature, humidity, and other conditions. Running a 100 yard dash is strenuous and can be hazardous. These big black dogs can overheat quickly in warm temperatures, especially in high humidity and under a blazing sun.
- Track condition: For example, if it's raining, what is the concern level regarding safe footing?
- Recovery time between runs: Usually runs are limited to two per day given the strenuous nature of this sport. Dogs need adequate time to recover (cool down, reduce panting, etc.) between runs. Having a cool, shaded resting place is important as is providing water as appropriate.
- Collars: "Dogs may run without a collar or wear any type of collar except choker collars, electronic training collars or head collar. Collars should be snug. Hanging tags pose a safety concern and it is suggested that tags be secured to the collar with tape. Dogs may run muzzled if desired. Clips or rubber bands may be used to keep long hair from falling across the dog's field of vision."**

How do I find and enter an event? ► A good place to start is by contacting your local AKC all-breed kennel club. They may be able to direct you to nearby Fast CAT resources.

On the AKC website there is a search function for finding events located at <https://webapps.akc.org/event-search/#/search>. Go to the events navigation buttons and select Performance, then scroll down and select Fast CAT. Then specify your geographic search, which can be by state or city. You can widen your search beyond that city by selecting the number of miles away you'd be interested in traveling. Then select the dates (from and to) for the search. You're now ready to hit the "Retrieve Events" button.

When you find an event of interest, click on "Events Document(s)," which will open a PDF file that contains a Premium List with entry information. Everything you need to know can be found there.

There are two types of entries — pre-registration (due on or before the event's published close date) and day of entry. A potential problem with the latter is that given the popularity of

these events, the slots available for day of entry can be very limited or unavailable. Pre-registered dogs are assigned a time slot for their run(s), which you'll select during the entry process. The Premium List also contains information about time slots for day of entry participants and fun run opportunities. A fun run allows a non-entered dog to run on the track. This option might offer you and your dog a chance to assess your mutual interest and learn about the sport.

Read the Premium List carefully. In addition to providing detailed information about and tips for participating in the event you'll find driving instructions, options for nearby hotels and campgrounds, contact information for the veterinarian on call, and more. If you have questions, there is usually an email address for the field secretary.

How can I learn more? ► These links should help you get started.

- *AKC Fast CAT - <https://www.akc.org/sports/coursing/fast-cat/>
- **Best Practices Guide To AKC Fast CAT (Fast Coursing Ability Test) - <https://www.akc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/BEST-PRACTICES-GUIDE-TO-AKC-FAST-CAT-June-2018.pdf>
- How do dogs run AKC Fast CAT? - <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/how-does-fast-cat-work-watching-akc-fastest-dog-usa/>
- Fast CAT Summary Description - https://images.akc.org/pdf/v2.FINAL.Fast_CAT_-_Summary_Description.pdf
- Fast CAT Regulations (starts on page 39) - <http://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RELURE.pdf>
- Fast CAT Regulation Resources - <https://www.akc.org/sports/coursing/fast-cat/regulations/>
- AKC Fast CAT video - <https://youtu.be/Nj84DHsP0VA>

What's next? ► Enjoying activities with your Berner deepens your bond and connection. Not every sport is a match for every dog and its human partner. What's important is to find mutual interests and savor the joy that ensues. Fast CAT is unique in that it relies on a dog's natural instincts to participate. May you both enjoy flying with the wind!

