



NORTHERN NEWFOUNDLAND CLUB

GUIDELINES FOR DRAUGHT CARTS

CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

INTRODUCTION:

Starting with draught work can be quite a daunting experience and you will need some specialist equipment for your dog to be able to train safely and effectively.

Firstly, your dog will require a suitable harness that fits correctly and securely and, secondly, if appropriate (over 12 months), a draughting cart.

It is always advised that you invest in your own equipment for draught work, so that is tailored to your dog, to ensure it is safe, to get the most out of training and, if you choose to, for entering draught tests.

It would be a shame if you are not able to enter a test or participate in training because the cart you have been borrowing from another kind member is suddenly not available!

We understand that this can be quite a costly investment and many people do often choose to build their own.

This document aims to offer some guidance of what the design and construction of a draughting cart should include to ensure that it is suitable and safe for your dog, and also fit for purpose for the draught work activities.



CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN:

So, what basic features does a draught cart need to have:

- A rear frame that accommodates a minimum of two wheels, which sits behind the dog and has a method of storage, such as a basket or container, for carrying the necessary equipment (water container, tyre pump, first aid kit, or even Christmas trees!).
- A pair of shafts (poles) that sit either side of the dog, which include brakes to stop the cart from striking the dog, and to stop the shafts from falling out of the harness attachment loops.
- Optional spreader bar or overhead curved pole, which connects the two side poles and arches over the dogs head/shoulder area.

Note: This is often used for assisting the dog on steep inclines or declines. Where this is absent it is essential that there is some provision so the handler, can assist the dog.

- An extra lead or cord may also be attached to back of the cart, as a grab/lift handle to enable the handler, or an assisting steward, to assist the dog where necessary.



WHAT SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR:

The following considerations should be taken into account for the design and construction of a draught cart, when either selecting one, or building one of your own:

- You want the cart to be as lightweight as possible - at the higher levels of draught, you must add weight to the cart and so you want to keep the design weight to a minimum.
- The cart must be stable and robust – you don't want the cart to be unstable or tip over easily. This is an immediate failure of a test!
- Weight distribution and the position of the wheels is important so that it is not putting more pressure on the dogs shoulders when they are working in the cart.
- The shafts should ideally be tapered so that it brings them in line with the dogs shoulders and about even with the front of the dog. Ideally these ends should flare out slightly from the dog's shoulders. This may require specialist engineering tools to achieve the correct shape.
Note: If the shafts are too short, the ends will make contact with the dog or 'jab' them. If they are too long, they will come in to contact with the dog when they are turning and interfere with the turning radius, making turning more difficult for the dog.
- There should not be a huge gap between the shafts and the dog. Additionally, you don't want the shafts to be too close together so that the dog has to squeeze between them. The dog should be able to lie down comfortably in the cart. A petite bitch and a large male might have different requirements.
- The back legs and tail of the dog should not be touching the rear of the cart, but equally there should not be a lot of wasted space between the rear cart and the dog. A large space between the dog and cart will make it harder for turning.
- The basket element of the cart should be capable of carrying up to 20kg of water. The load required increases incrementally from 5kg to 20kg and multiples of 5kg water containers are often used. In addition, you will need to carry drinking water and a bowl for your dog, and a pump and first aid kit.
- The storage element needs to be able to securely stow the equipment you are carrying without significant movement i.e. secure with bungee cords or similar.
- Something else to consider, is how you will transport your cart. Depending on your vehicle size you are likely to need to remove the shafts and possibly separate the curved pole, and you may also need to remove the wheels. Some carts incorporate wheel clips that make this a quick and easy job.

Considering all these points, will make your dog's draughting experience better and safer!

TEAMS OF MORE THAN ONE DOG – BRACE:

An existing draughting cart can often be modified so that it can accommodate what is known as a 'brace team'. This is a team of two dogs pulling a single cart. Instead of the two shafts either side of the dog, a cart for a brace team usually has a single central shaft that is modified to have four rear attachment points for the two dogs harness traces to attach.

It should be noted that the weight to be carried as a load for a brace team, is increased by 50%, so please consider this if adapting any single cart.



ALTERNATIVE CART DESIGNS THAT CAN BE USED FOR TRAINING – TRAVOIS:

A travois is an alternative ‘sleigh’ type design of cart, which does not incorporate wheels.

Handlers must be more experienced with a standard cart before attempting any draught training or tests with this style of cart as it is potentially more difficult to manoeuvre. However, it adds another dimension to your draught experience if you so choose.



- A travois typically has two runners in contact with the ground which greatly increases the resistance for moving the load. For this reason, the load required to be carried is halved in the test.
- The runners should be smooth but need to be strong. Wooden runners are sometimes protected with metal strips as there is significant wear on them when working on paved or cobbled surfaces.
- The shafts from the front of the travois should be shaped so they run parallel with the dog’s hip and shoulders.
- The platform for the load needs to be large enough to carry 10kg of water securely, plus drinking water, but the overall travois should be as light as possible. Similar to a wooden cart the shafts may require specialist engineering to be bent correctly.

Using the travois correctly and safely requires practice and they handle differently to a two wheeled cart. On slopes the whole travois can slide, and so a strong strap is required at the rear so the handler can control the back of the travois and prevent the shafts from pushing on the side of the dog.

It is almost impossible to reverse a loaded travois and so in a test, judges may allow a steward to lift the back end off the ground a couple of inches to facilitate this.



USING YOUR DOG AND CART FOR CART RIDES:

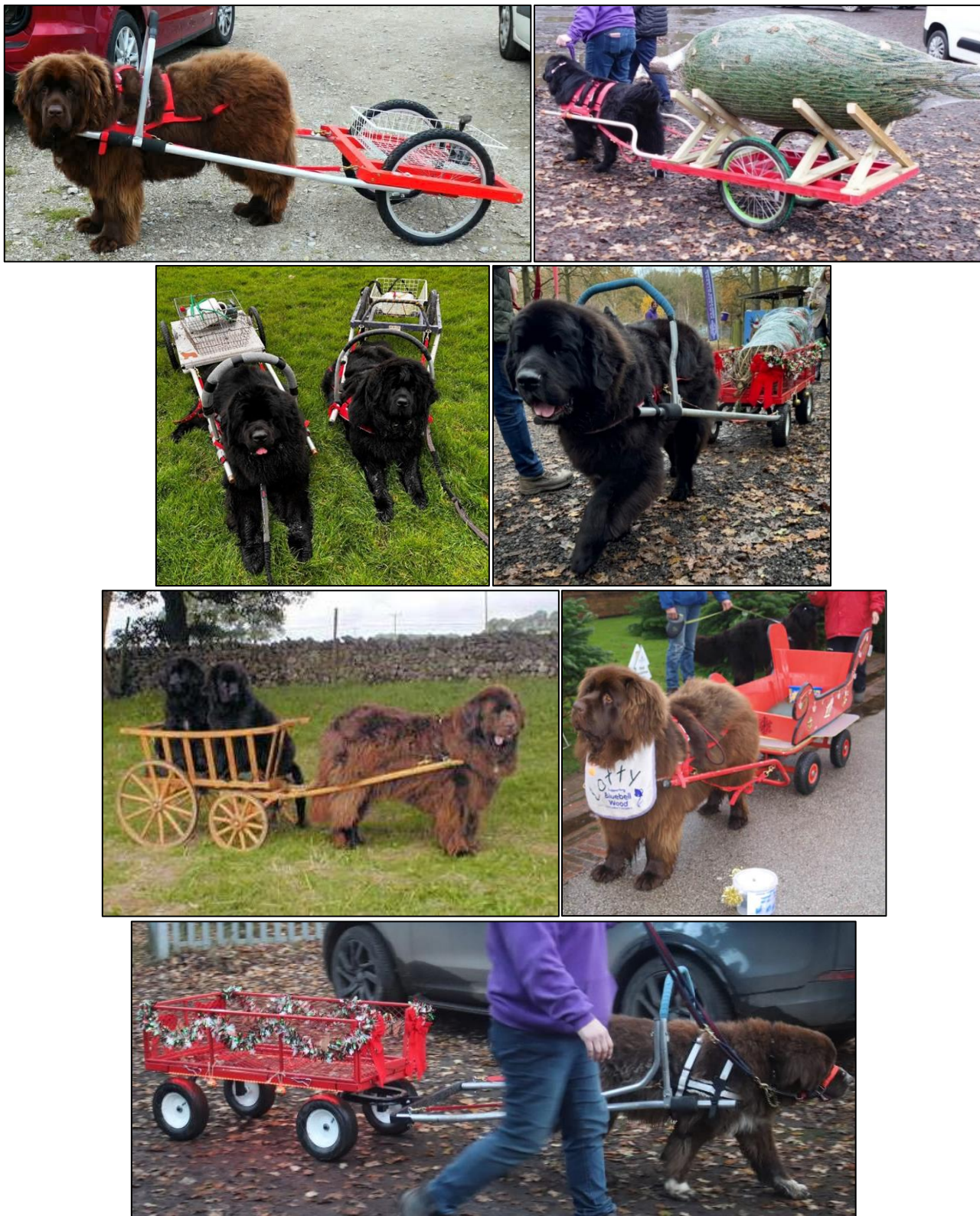
Carts have been custom made or adapted for cart rides for children. Priority must be given to the safety and comfort of the dog and the safety of any child passenger. The weight of any child must be very carefully monitored and restricted, and this activity must be covered by specific public liability insurance. Both dog and handler should be very experienced.



DIFFERENT DESIGNS OF CARTS:

Remember, you can find many different designs of cart. Some are better for the formal working draught training and tests. Others are designed more for putting on a display or cosmetically appealing for fun activities with your Newfoundland. This type of decorated cart is often four wheeled and can include a swingletree – a small wooden or metal bar behind the dog that attaches to the cart and balances the pull. They can be very elaborate and beautiful. They are not generally suitable for standard draught training and tests as they are used on flat grounds with minimal loads for parades or demonstrations.

Here are some additional examples of different cart designs:



Remember it is all about having fun for you and your dog, socialising, and learning new experiences!