

Competition Rules

The Open European HTM & Freestyle Championship

valid from 1 September 2024

The Open European Championship (OEC)

The Open European Championships is a competition which will be held each year. The date is to be decided and announced by the hosting country no less than 10 months in advance.

Participants from all over the world can enter but the competition will always be held in a European country.

Handlers can represent the country in which they reside or the country in which they have their citizenship.

Up to two representatives from the competing European countries will meet and decide where the competition will be held two years in advance. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the competition details of which will be announced no later than 6 months in advance.

The OEC rules can only be changed at a meeting held in connection with the OEC. Two representatives from each competing European country can participate in the meeting and rules can only be changed if 50% or more of the participating representatives vote for the changes. Rule changes agreed one year will come into force at the following year's OEC.

National Team:

Each participating country can enter a National Team consisting of three or four Heelwork To Music and three or four Freestyle dog and handler teams.

Each participating team can have a named reserve (travelling or non-travelling) in each discipline. The reserve will only compete should one of the other participants on the team withdraw a dog from competition at the latest during the morning briefing on the day of the competition. Should a country enter less than three competitors in a discipline, they will still be able to compete for a place in the individual finals.

The competition is open to all dogs with or without a pedigree.

Entries

Team entries can be submitted by the National FCI recognized Kennel Clubs or by a national HTM/freestyle organisation.

In case multiple teams are presented, the priority must be given to the team who qualified under the National Organization which meets the following requirements:

The Organization or institution that for more years, in that country, recognized and promoted Dogdance and regularly organizes international competitions;

It has done selections with a team of judges recognized internationally, with proven experience;

The qualifications are open to each dog with or without any pedigree.

If a decision still cannot be made, the event organiser will have the chance to decide between the teams sent by the different clubs.

If a country's Kennel Club or HTM/Freestyle Organization chooses not to enter a full team, entries for the rest of the available spaces up to 4 HTM dog and handler teams and 4 Freestyle dog and handler teams plus a reserve for each section from that country will be accepted from independent handlers. **The organizer has the possibility to offer individual handlers to compete as a national team if there are three or more individual competing dog and handler teams. If there are more individual teams from the same country than the OEC regulations permit for a national team the organizers will propose based on their time of entry. In any case these independent teams can qualify for the individual final and compete for the individual title.**

Winner of the Open European Championship:

Winner of the Open European Team Championship in Heelwork To Music will be the country whose 3 highest scoring competitors have the combined highest scores from the qualifying round.

Winner of the Open European Team Championship in Freestyle will be the country whose 3 highest scoring competitors have the combined highest scores from the qualifying round.

Please note that only the 3 highest scoring dog and handler teams from each country's scores will count when the team winners are found.

Winner of the Individual Open European Championship in Heelwork to Music will be the competitor with the combined highest score from the qualifying round and the Individual Final.

Winner of the Individual Open European Championship in Freestyle will be the competitor with the combined highest score from the qualifying round and the Individual Final.

The Competition is held over three days.

Day 1 will be the Open European HTM Championships for team and individuals.

Day 2 will be the Open European Freestyle Championships for team and individuals.

Day 3 will be the Individual Finals for the Open European HTM and Freestyle Championship.

The Individual Final

The ten dog and handler teams that have acquired the highest score in each of the disciplines qualify for the Individual Finals (10 Heelwork to Music and 10 Freestyle).

Running Orders

- Draws should be made by the Host Country at the close of entries.
- The draw should be videoed (and not edited) to show fairness.
- Each Country to have two envelopes – one for HTM and one for Freestyle. Four papers are to be placed into each envelope. On each paper will be the name of a Team Member and their dog.
- If there are less than 4 members in a Team, then blank papers will be placed in the envelope. Example: only 2 members in a team – in that envelope will be 2 named papers and two blank papers.
- The order of the Teams for the Training Day also must be drawn.

*

1. Draw the envelopes for the Running Order of each country for Heelwork To Music. For Example France 1, Germany 2, Japan 3 etc. If there are 12 countries entered there would be running orders in sections as follows: 1 – 12, 13 – 24, 25 – 36, 37 – 48.

2. From the first envelope, select one paper "Running Order 1", the following paper would be "Running Order 13", the third paper would be "Running Order 24" and the fourth paper would be "Running Order 37".
3. Ensure there are always at least 10 dogs between handlers with multiple dogs.
4. Repeat from * for the Freestyle Running Orders.
5. Notify the Countries of their teams' running orders.
6. The running orders for the Individual Finals are to be determined randomly by drawing lots.

General Rules

- All dogs are entered at the exhibitor's own account and risk. The organizer cannot be held liable for damages caused by dogs or exhibitors.
- Dogs must comply with the host country's Dog Legislation.
- Dogs competing must be at least 18 months old on the day of the competition.

In the ring

- No activity should be conducted which may injure the dog.
- Once a dog has entered the ring to compete, no further practice is permitted.
- The team is under judge's orders from entering the ring to leaving it. All requests from the judges must be followed.

Judging:

- Each round in the Open European Championship will be judged by a minimum of three judges to be chosen by the organizers from among judges having several years of judging experience, including preferably, at the international level.

In the case of equal points:

Heelwork to music:

- If 2 dogs have equal points in the Heelwork to Music competition, the dog with the highest points in "Presentation and Accuracy" wins.
- If they still have equal points the dog with the highest points in "Degree of Difficulty and Content" wins.
- If they still have equal points, the 1st judge will decide the winner.
- If two teams have equal points in the team competition, the winner will be found using the same criteria.

Freestyle:

- If 2 dogs have equal points in the Freestyle competition, the dog with the highest points in "Music and Interpretation" wins.
- If they still have equal points the dog with the highest points in "Presentation and Accuracy" wins.
- If they still have equal points, the 1st judge will decide the winner.
- If two teams have equal points in the team competition, the winner will be found using the same criteria.

Competition rules:

- Information about ring size and where the judges will be seated must be available to competitors no later than 4 weeks prior to the competition.
- The ring has to be at least 400 m² with a rectangular shape within reasonable proportions. The judges are seated on the long side.
- Before the handler and dog begin their routine, the handler must acknowledge the judges at the table by bowing, curtsying or “nodding”. The dog can do a quick trick, but this should not take more than a few seconds to complete.
- The dog is not allowed to be in costume or fancy dress. A decorated collar is permitted. If you are in doubt of what is allowed, ask at the briefing before the competition commences.
- The dog must be off lead in the ring.
- No food or toys are allowed in the ring.
- The venue should at best be big enough for all competing dogs to stay indoors at the same venue during the competition, wherever possible.

Props:

- Props can be used if they are appropriate to the choice of music and incorporated in the routine.
- It is the handler’s responsibility to bring a helper that will place the prop in the ring prior to the competition.

Bitches in season

- Bitches in season are allowed to compete but must be kept away from the competition area until all the other routines are completed.
- Bitches in season compete at the end of the competition.
- The organisers must be notified that a bitch is in season as soon as possible and no later than at the morning briefing.

Music – to avoid errors and misunderstandings regarding the music, the following rules will be adhered to:

- Music must be handed in on the evening prior to the competition.
- Music check-in times will be announced to the competitors no later than 4 weeks prior to the show.
- It is the handler's responsibility to hand in a CD *or other portable media*, which only contains the track/version of the music they wish to perform to.
- It is the handler's responsibility to bring a back-up CD *or other portable media* in case there is an error on the original-CD.
- If a handler competes in HTM and Freestyle, the handler must hand in a CD *or other portable media* for each discipline (one CD for each routine).
- If a handler competes with several dogs, a CD *or other portable media* for each dog and class must be handed in.
- If the music is longer than the routine, the music will be stopped when the handler CLEARLY signals the routine is completed.
- If the music stops during a routine the competitor must be given the opportunity to complete the routine. The handler's back up CD *or other portable media* may be used and/or alternative equipment, if this was the reason for failure. The judges will continue marking from the point at which the music stopped. □
- If the music stops during a routine, the handler can choose not to complete the routine and be judged solely on the part of the routine performed prior to the music stopping. □
- The length of the music may be up to 4 minutes. □

Disqualification – a handler and dog will be disqualified if:

- The dog is on lead in the ring.
- The handler has food or a toy in the ring.
- The handler practises harsh handling.
- The dog relieves itself in the ring.
- The dog is out of control in the ring.
- The dog leaves the ring before the routine is completed.

- If the dog attacks another dog or person in the venue or on the show ground.

Other things that will reduce points:

- If the dog barks continuously or for the greater part of the routine. If the barking disturbs the presentation or accuracy of the routine.
- If the handler physically manipulates or holds the dog in a position/move.

HEELWORK TO MUSIC

- The maximum time limit for the duration of the routine is 4 minutes.
- Heelwork to Music is, as the name suggests, “Heelwork to Music“. The routine must therefore consist of at least 75% heelwork.
- The dog must stay within 2 meters of the handler while doing the at least 75% heelwork of the routine.
- For the freestyle portion of the routine the dog is allowed to be further away than 2 meters from the handler

Heelwork

The following positions are considered to be heelwork in HTM:

- The dog has his right shoulder parallel with the handler’s left leg.
- The dog has his left shoulder parallel with the handler’s right leg.
- The dog has his right shoulder parallel with the handler's right leg facing opposite the handler.
- The dog has his left shoulder parallel with the handler's left leg facing opposite the handler.
- The dog between the handler’s legs with both shoulders parallel to the handler’s legs.
- The dog between the handler’s legs with both shoulders parallel to the handler’s legs facing the opposite direction.
- In front of, with his side to the handler. The dogs right shoulder must be in line with the handler's right leg or the dog's left shoulder must be in line with the handler's left leg.
- Behind, with his side to the handler. The dogs right shoulder must be in line with the handler's left leg or the dog's left shoulder must be in line with the handler's right leg.

These positions must be kept the same in movement – the dog must not jump/bounce or “crab” to keep the position by the handler.

The dogs body should be straight, and parallel to the handler.

The dog must not move in 2 tracks during heelwork, sideways movement is the exception to this rule. The dog must keep the same distance in relation to the handler in all positions.

The dog must move in the same direction as the handler.

The dog must follow the handler’s choice of pace.

FREESTYLE

- The maximum time limit for the duration of the routine is 4 minutes.
- There is no requirement to heelwork or other specific moves in the freestyle competition, however it should be clear to the judges that it is a freestyle routine and the amount of heelwork should not exceed 25% of the routine.
- Moves are defined as anything that is not heelwork. (for a definition of heelwork, see above).

Points are given according to the following:

Presentation and Accuracy – MAXIMUM SCORE: 10 points

Cooperation and coordination between dog and handler

The routine should clearly demonstrate the dog's and handler's attentiveness to each other – so the coordination/cooperation in the routine is as fluent as possible.

Presentation

The routine is accurate and well presented in the ring. It flows naturally without abrupt breaks/stops or mistakes. The dog and handler are confident in their performance and know their routine. The handler/dog makes the performance seem easy.

Show quality

The team has appeal and performs an excellent routine that appeals to the judges and the audience. The handler's performance is appropriate for a family audience.

Any other items which may be relevant to the performance and content of the routine.

Degree of difficulty and Content (Technical Merit) - MAXIMUM SCORE: 10 points

The routine's content conforms to the definitions for

HTM or Freestyle. Amount of moves or heelwork

The number of moves and contents of the routine is appropriate.

Content and degree of difficulty of heelwork or moves

There is a good variety of moves in the routine and the degree of difficulty is sufficient for the expected level at the competition/event. The choreography varies so the routine is interesting.

Choreography

The choreography is designed so the heelwork and moves have no abrupt stops but are integrated smoothly – and the routine is made to suit the dog and its movement. **Use of prop**

The team should make good use of any prop and it should be well integrated in the routine.

Focus on the dog

The routine is performed so the focus is on the dog or the teamwork. It is not the handler who should attract attention.

Use of available ring space

Routines should make good use of the available ring space.

Signals

The signals between dog/handler are discrete or they are put into the choreography so they do not distract from the routine.

Any other items which may be relevant to the degree of difficulty and technical merit of the routine.

Music and interpretation – MAXIMUM SCORE : 10 points

Interpretation of the music

The music is interpreted. Steady/emotional presentation to emotional music – enthusiastic/powerful presentation to music with more power. If the music tells a story, it should be incorporated in the routine.

Is the routine suited to the music?

The routine is in harmony with the music. All the moves are based on the music and the inspiration from the music. The routine is created and presented so the dog's movement, the handler's movement and music become one.

Is the music suited to the dog?

The music is suited to the dogs speed, movement and enthusiasm.

Costume and prop

The costume and prop (if any is used) should be appropriate for the music and theme. Any other items which may be relevant to the degree of difficulty and technical merit of the routine.

Deductions – Marked separately on the judging sheet**Excessive Barking:**

If the dog barks continuously or for the greater part of the routine. If the barking disturbs the presentation or accuracy of the routine.

Manipulation:

If the handler physically manipulates or holds the dog in a position/move.