

# Blank Search Areas

**What is a blank search area?** The ASB Terms and Definitions document (Technical Report 025) defines a blank as any area or container that does not contain source material. A blank search is a training or certification exercise in which target odor is absent.



## Blank Search Area Benefits

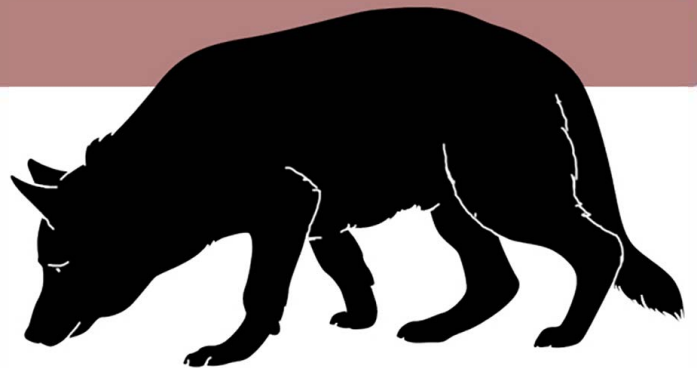
- When we work blank areas, we learn to read our dog's behavior in the absence of target odor.
- We learn to watch for "crittering" or off-task behaviors
- Working blanks allows us to test and flex nose time and condition our dogs to longer searches.
- Working blanks teaches our dogs how to work through frustration.
- Working blank areas builds our confidence in our dogs and our fluency as a team.
- Documenting blank areas in our training records demonstrates and verifies that our dogs are more than anomaly detectors.
- When worked with the same intensity as our areas that contain source material, we can simulate real-world search scenarios and our dogs learn that not every area contains source.

## When is my K-9 ready?

A K-9 team is likely ready to begin blank search area training when:

- K-9 and handler have worked through foundational training
- K-9 is reliably able to discriminate target odor from non-target odor independently
- K-9 and handler team are confident in the search, locate, and report sequence including a reliable trained final response
- K-9 has worked large areas containing source with long nose time/search duration
- K-9 team is confident in known, blind, and double-blind areas containing source

A K-9 team's readiness for blank areas depends largely on the individual dog, its training, and its handler's confidence in foundational skills such as recall and reliability in known areas.



Working blank areas is critically important to developing a well-rounded K-9 team. Blank areas must be worked with the same enthusiasm as areas containing source. Handlers, like their K-9s, are varied in whether work is rewarded after searching a blank area and whether a verbal cue is established to let the K-9 know their work is complete. Most handlers agree that a variable reward schedule is beneficial for field deployment and working blank areas.