

## FAIR GOES TO THE DOGS

### Pooches leap for distance, toys in dock-jumping competition

By Tim Hearden, Record Searchlight, June 17, 2004

ANDERSON -- Tom and Lynden Whitman came all the way from Carmel Valley to watch their dog jump off a dock into a pool of water.

They learned about the Shasta District Fair's new DockDogs competition from a relative who lives in Anderson, so they entered their black Labrador, Lulu.

The dog soared 14 feet, 9 inches Wednesday in the first wave of the DockDogs event.

"We thought she'd have fun doing it, so we came on up," Lynden Whitman said. "It's good, clean fun."

Lulu joins dozens of other canines as central attractions at this year's 114th fair. Two sets of dock-jumping events each day will culminate in a final round Sunday afternoon, at which competitors will try to boost their rankings to qualify for next year's ESPN Great Outdoor Games.

In addition, the Northern California Dog Training Club will hold agility, duck herding and other demonstrations throughout the remainder of the fair, which opened Wednesday and runs through Sunday.

"A lot of people in the community don't even know what their dogs can do," said Charlotte Pritchard of Tehama, whose three dogs include an Australian shepherd that was a national champion cattle herder in 2001.

"They (spectators) have to learn ... you can play with your dog," said Pritchard, who's organizing three duck herding demonstrations Friday. "A dog's smart enough he can learn from you."

As of noon Wednesday, 28 people had registered their dogs for the dock-jumping competition and several people were in line to sign up. Anyone with a dog and a ball or floatable toy may pay the \$20 fee and enter, organizers said.

The fast-growing sport involves a dog running 40 feet down a dock and jumping as far as it can into water.

Dogs in the first wave Wednesday jumped as far as 19 feet. The all-time record of 26 feet, 6 inches is held by Little Morgan, a black Labrador from Minnesota. Todd Bobula of Dayton, Nev., has seen his border collie leap as far as 22 feet, 4 inches. It'll try to top that at this week's fair.

"There's going to be dogs from Washington, California, Oregon, Nevada," Bobula said. "This will be our 10th month (of competing). This is the first event of the new season."

The event is sanctioned by DockDogs. Entrants in the fair's competition are placed in a national database, from which the best jumpers during the 2004-2005 season will compete for spots in the Great Outdoor Games. Qualifiers are already chosen for this year's games July 8-11 in Madison, Wis.

Brian Evans, who recently moved from Redding to Klamath Falls, Ore., watched the competition Wednesday and considered entering his three border collies. "They should bring it to Redding on a regular basis," Evans, 38. "It's a good sport."

The dock jumpers won't provide the only entertainment, however. During today's agility demonstrations, trained dogs will shimmy through an obstacle course of tunnels, jumps and the like.

On Friday, dogs will show their skills at rounding up ducks and herding them into a pen, while Saturday's demonstration will feature dogs retrieving Frisbee-like discs.

Haven Humane Society will showcase its adoptable dogs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Opening day attendance for the Shasta District Fair was 13,623.

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John Stubler / Record Searchlight

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE: Gabe, a border collie, falls short of grabbing a tennis ball but wows spectators with his jump during a DockDogs competition Wednesday at the Shasta District Fair.