

What is a Certificate of Merit (C.O.M.) and a Certificate of Working Ability (C.W.A.) and why should you get one with your dog:

SASDA is the custodian of the working stock dog in South Africa. Our focus is on facilitating the breeding good healthy working stock dogs, to promote better and more economical management of stock.

Our registration scheme is divided into three categories: Stud breeder, Approved breeder and Ordinary breeder.

The **Stud breeder** is someone who has breeding bitches that have achieved a **COM**.

The **Approved breeder** is someone who has breeding bitches that have achieved a **CWA**.

The **Ordinary breeder** is someone who has breeding bitches with **no recognized form of working ability**.

When the Registration scheme was developed in the 1960's, the breeders were mostly farmers, therefore the majority were breeding from stock working dogs. Many years later various dog sports evolved, such as obedience, working trials, agility etc. at which Border Collies & Kelpies excelled. This resulted in those breeds becoming increasingly popular for these sports and as pets too. This has led to many people with non-stock working dogs, becoming breeders with SASDA.

So, what is a Certificate of Merit?

To compete in sheepdog trials, one starts in the Beginner class (entry level course). Once the handler and dog achieve 85% in this class they qualify into the Junior class. In this class when the dog achieves a score of 70 %, they qualify for a certificate of merit (COM). In other words when you have a dog with a COM, you know it has a certain level of working ability. This is why our breeders with COM bitches are awarded Stud Breeder status.

So, what is a Certificate of Working Ability?

Not everyone who has working stock dogs, has the time or the inclination to compete in sheepdog trials. For this reason, the Certificate of Working Ability was developed, enabling such persons to have their dogs tested for working ability. The test is of a lower standard than the COM, but it still enables these dogs, that are often from good bloodlines, to be recognised as good breeding material.

All recognised judges, plus a few specifically appointed handlers are CWA testers. The test can take place at a sheepdog trial, at a training clinic, or at a private venue. The owner is required to be or become a member of SASDA prior to the CWA test. There are certain specific elements that the dog needs to be able do, i.e., a short outrun, a bring, a drive away and either a pen or holding sheep onto a fence. In other words, the dog needs to undergo some sort of training before it can be put to the test. It is most certainly not a once off introduction to sheep to "see what the dog can do". Breeders who make the effort to test their dogs for a CWA, and who have a breeding bitch that passes the test, are classified as Approved Breeders, since one knows that their dogs have proven working ability.

For more details on cost of tests and location of judges and CWA testers, contact the SASDA Office or go to the website: www.sasda.za.net.