

# ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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*Ontario Conservation Centre*

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Honourable John Yakabuski  
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Whitney Block, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 6630  
99 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1W3

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), its 100,000 members, subscribers and supports, and 725 member clubs, we are reaching out to you to discuss the issue of training and trialing areas, including the construction of new areas. For decades, our members and the sporting dog community-at-large have been expressing concern at the dwindling availability of training and trialing areas due to prohibitive wording in *Ontario Regulation 668/98: Wildlife in Captivity* under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. We recommend minor regulatory changes to maximize this small business opportunity and the important role they play in our hunting heritage.

Due to the current wording in the Wildlife in Captivity regulation, only training and trialing areas that were licensed prior to June 9, 1997 can exist. There is currently no method to transfer those licences to a new licence holder and there is no way to obtain a licence to establish a new training and trialing area. As a result, when a licence holder passes away or can no longer operate, Ontario loses a training and trialing area with no possibility of replacing it. Over time, more and more areas will be forced to close, leading to the eventual elimination of training and trialing in Ontario. This is something that the OFAH, the sporting dog community, and the owners of these small businesses cannot and will not accept.

Hunting with hounds and beagles is a popular activity and associated with important traditions, for which the cornerstone is well-trained dogs. The benefits of training and trialing areas for training, testing and exercising hunting dogs has become evident on many levels. These areas provide a safe and controlled environment for dogs and their handlers to become proficient in their specific hunting practice, and provides a convenient location to expose youth to an important outdoor activity. Novice dogs and handlers require training before they begin hunting, and these areas are designed to provide real life training experience with minimized risk of dogs running onto roads, getting into areas where they are not permitted, and chasing non-target wildlife or livestock.

In addition to creating well-trained hunting dogs, training and trialing areas are an economic opportunity for the owners and their local communities. Events on average have around 100 people participating in some way, many of whom travel to attend. This provides local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and gas stations with an influx in customers. The loss of training and trialing areas in Ontario means the loss of this economic benefit, as competitors will no longer be coming into Ontario for these events. If training and trialing areas cease to exist in Ontario, provincial competitors will have to travel out of province to participate in training and trialing events. Furthermore, most training and trialing area operates as a small business, supported by the fees paid by the dog owners that use a particular training area.

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This issue has been a priority for the OFAH Sporting Dog Advisory Committee, which includes the Ontario Sporting Dogs Association, the Oshawa Beagle Club, and North American Versatile Hunting Dogs. We have been in contact with staff from the MNRF Wildlife Section and, based on those discussions, the OFAH believes there are relatively simple solutions to this issue. Because training and trialing areas are so important to the sporting dog community and hunting traditions as a whole, the OFAH is seeking an amendment to Section 29 of *Ontario Regulation 668/98*. Currently this section permits the operation of training and trialing areas for “a person who, on June 9, 1997, owned and operated a train and trail area if the person holds a licence to own and operate a train and trial area.” We would like to see this amended to read “a person who holds a licence to own and operate a train and trial area.” The removal of the requirement to have held a licence prior to June 9, 1997 will allow for new individuals to own and operate training and trialing areas. We also ask that the MNRF issue new licences and allow for the transfer of existing licenses. This small administrative change would have a significant positive impact on the sporting dog community.

The OFAH strongly believes that allowing for the continuation of training and trialing areas in Ontario is beneficial for local economies, the sporting dog community, and Ontario’s hunting heritage as a whole. We look forward to discussing this request in greater detail.

Yours in Conservation,



Matt DeMille  
Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services

MD/jb

cc: OFAH Board of Directors  
OFAH Sporting Dogs Advisory Committee  
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director  
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager of Policy  
OFAH Fish & Wildlife Staff