



*The AMWA
Backpack Certificate
Handbook*



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AMWA

Alaskan Malamute Working Association

The Association's Objective is to:

Promote and encourage responsible ownership and the working ability of Alaskan Malamutes by example, education and general exchange of information.

Backpacking is all about teamwork; both owner and dog working together to discover and traverse the wild places of the United Kingdom.

AMWA aims to encourage both team members to progressively work up confidence and aptitude through a series of increasing challenging awards that are tailored to the terrain, facilities and climate of the UK.

Whether a new comer to backpacking, or an old-hand, this certification has a level suitable for your abilities and aspirations.

We hope that our handbook will inspire you partake in the AMWA Backpacking Certification scheme.

Gareth Cook

Assessors

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Getting Started

What's it all about?

The backpacking certificate scheme is a range of graded challenges aimed at inspiring you to go out and explore the UK countryside with your dog. Whether it's a gentle introduction to backpacking through AMWA's family orientated weekends, or a demanding expedition through the wilderness, AMWA will support, encourage and train you to meet your goals.

Designed specifically for the UK's terrain and campsites, the scheme offers awards for day, overnight and expedition level backpacking. This is supported by AMWA's tutorials in dog care and backpacking techniques.

Backpacking isn't just about how much weight your dog can carry over a set distance. We believe that it's about you and your dogs working together as a team to navigate a trail whilst enjoying the great countryside around you. It's about supporting one another. Above all this is smart travelling. By this we mean properly equipped, light weight, enjoyable backpacking where all members of the team carry equipment.

Travel smart - Not heavy

Is it for me?

YES! There really is a level of backpacking that is available to everyone. Day backpacking allows you to keep the weight right down and get out and explore your local surroundings or somewhere new; whilst overnight and expedition level backpacking enables you to push yourselves by travelling increasing further over ever wilder terrain.

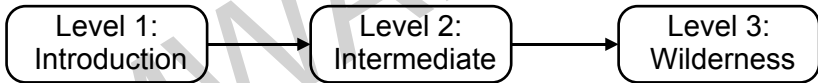
You will need some specialist hiking equipment but it needn't cost the earth. To help you get going and progress, AMWA can supply support, guidance and even suggest other people to trek with that are undertaking the same award.

Backpacking Levels

The scheme has been split into 3 distinct areas of backpacking; day, overnight and expedition grade. Within these areas there are progressively more difficult challenges to attempt. To ensure that you have the best possible chance of completing each level safely, most have prerequisites that must be met before they can be undertaken. A full breakdown of the prerequisites and definitions of terrain may be found in the appendices.

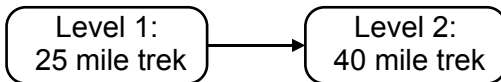
Day Backpacking

A range of 6 to 15 mile day hikes traversing ever more difficult terrain.



Overnight Backpacking

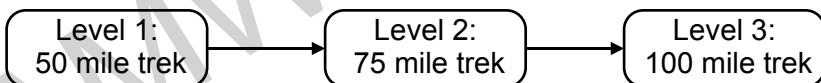
Backpacking across non-wilderness countryside. It involves one or more nights self sufficient camping. Participants must have completed Day backpacking level 2.



Expedition Backpacking

Long distance backpacking across true wilderness. This level involves self sufficient camping and a spirit of adventure.

Participants must have completed Overnight backpacking level 2.



How do I begin?

Often people will join in at one of AMWA's backpacking events held throughout the year. Here you can have a go in the company of like-minded people. We can often lend backpacks as well.

Successful completion of one of these events leads to the awarding of the Day Backpacking Level 1 award.

If you have some experience of backpacking you may begin at Day Backpacking level 2, but you will miss out on the fun and companionship of the AMWA events.

How it works

With the exception of the very first level, the award scheme is based on self assessment. Participants will let AMWA know that they are undertaking one of the levels by sending the assessors details of the route being undertaken. This will include information such as the actual route, campsites, terrain and proof of completion of any preceding levels and tutorials. Our assessors will then either confirm that the route meets the required standard or suggest some changes.

We will also ask that you provide some basic evidence that you reached certain points en-route.

Once you've completed the trek, send in the proof and we will award the certificate. It's as simple as that.

As mentioned above, the very first level works a little differently. As it is an introduction to backpacking, the day backpacking level 1 award can be undertaken by both you and your dog attending one of AMWA's backpacking weekend events and walking your dog with the group.

Tutorials

Don't worry, we're not sending you back to school. Nor are there any exams.

AMWA is committed to helping people work with their dogs in a safe, fun manner. To this end we have introduced a series of talks at key points of the certificate.

These talks can be attended at the May Bank Holiday backpacking weekend or at the August Bank Holiday fun weekend on Salisbury plain. The topics covered are

- Dog Care: Some basics
- Backpacking Techniques

Amongst the many areas covered you'll find out how to recognise the signs of dehydration, bandage a cut paw, learn hill descent techniques, pack loading and pre-departure checks.

As certain levels of the certificate involve walking in remote areas of the UK, AMWA strongly suggests that participants familiarise themselves with basic human first aid.

On the Trail

Companions - Do I have to walk alone?

Your safety is of utmost importance. Therefore you must not undertake the awards alone. This doesn't mean that your companion(s) have to have a dog and live off of camp rations, but they do have to accompany you. AMWA may also be able to help find people that want to undertake the same award level.

The award will be given to a dog and their handler. Whilst both dog and handler must have completed the prerequisites, they needn't have completed them together. By this we mean that anyone that has been awarded a certificate at a given level can take out a dog on an award trek below or for the level of the award they have passed.

As an example, Bill has completed Expedition backpacking level 1 with his dog Snowy. His partner, Joan, has reached Overnight Backpacking Level 1 with their dog Rocky. Either Bill or Joan can enter Rocky for Overnight backpacking Level 2 but only Bill can enter Snowy for Expedition Backpacking Level 2.

Companions are there for safety and for boosting morale. They are not there to carry your equipment or walk your dog. Whilst they can briefly help out if needed, participants must not rely on companions as an easy way out. As these awards stress travelling smart, companions that are using your tent / cooking equipment / etc may share the portage of the shared items only.

Where can I trek

This will depend on the grade and level of backpacking that you intend to partake in.

The Day Backpacking level 1 award is held at AMWA's backpacking events. In past years they have been held in the Forest of Dean, the New Forest, the Cotswolds and around Cheddar.

Day Backpacking Level 2 and the Overnight Backpacking grade can be undertaken anyway in the UK, as long as it is in the countryside, but not in a wilderness area.

Day Backpacking Level 3 and the Expedition Backpacking grade can only be undertaken in designated wilderness areas. There are 26 of them scattered across the whole of the United Kingdom. So there should be one that is near to you (See appendix).

Equipment

There's nothing worse than camping out and finding that you've left something behind.

There's nothing more dangerous than relying on good weather, carrying the absolute minimum and getting caught out.

You need to reach a sensible compromise between the weight carried and the ability to deal with anything that is thrown at you - weather, injury, getting lost, etc.

Whilst we have attached a suggested list of equipment it is down to each participant to use their experience and knowledge to determine what you and your dog will need. Please be aware that part of the application form for attempting an award is the completion of a list of equipment you'll be taking coupled to some information on how you plan to deal with emergency situations.

Consider the route, terrain, duration and time of year. Also consider where you can get drinking water and provisions en-route. This will determine how much you need to carry. All participants on overnight and expedition level awards must carry at least one days emergency rations for all team members.

Self Sufficiency

Both the overnight and expedition levels mention self sufficient camping. We do not mean that participants must camp in the wild and carry all rations for every day of the trek.

Instead, participants will be expected to camp in registered campsites and prepare their own meals. Take-away's and eating out are unacceptable.

If the route passes villages, participants are expected to take advantage of them and stock up as required. As a guide for non-wilderness travel, we'd suggest planning to purchase lunch, dinner and breakfast around lunchtime each day. This meets the travelling smart policy of travelling light but being well prepared.

Day backpack participants at level 2 and above should carry all provisions required that day. Water can be replenished as required.

All participants on overnight and expedition level awards must carry at least one days emergency rations for all team members (dog and human).

Self Assessment and the Awards

How will you know that I've actually done the trek?

The certificate is self-assessment based, so it is down to you to record your progress and then afterwards report back to our assessors on how you actually progressed.

Each day you should take a few photos en-route that show you have reached key points or identifiable locations ie:- a monument, trig point, road sign or obvious topological feature. The location of these photos can then be marked on the map. When linked to a photo of say a daily newspaper, the electronic time/date stamp held against each photo will give a clear record of your progress.

Whilst this may sound arduous, it's not meant to be. We aren't expecting participants to provide a step-by-step log of their every move. We just want to see reasonable evidence of your progress.

At higher levels of the award, assessors may request that a photo is taken en-route at a specific point of their choosing.

What else do the assessors do?

AMWA's assessors primary purpose is to support you in any way they can to ensure that you reach your goal. We also want to make sure that you aren't attempting either too easy or too hard a trek for the level you are attempting to gain. Finally we are concerned about the safety of the whole team and we aim to ensure that everyone has met the pre-requisites for the award being attempted, know what they are doing, where they are going and how they will cope in the unfortunate event of an emergency happening.

The Award

Primarily this is the satisfaction of pushing yourself and your dogs to complete a challenge. All successful participants will receive a certificate and a record of their achievement on the AMWA website roll of honour.

Certificates will be given out once a year at the annual Salisbury Plain fun weekend in August.

And finally ...

Any rule can be broken or ignored. Shortcuts can be taken. Knowledge can be skimmed upon. But what will you actually gain from doing that?

Follow the spirit of the rules and you will find that the guidance and rules mentioned in this handbook will support and encourage you to progress through the various levels and grades of award.

Above all else, remember that the enjoyment in backpacking comes from working together as a team with your dogs. It's about the countryside you traverse, the people you meet and the places you visit. Take your time and enjoy it.

Appendices

A. Terrain

Non-Wilderness

Normal rural countryside, moorland and forests. It can be familiar to the participants and will be primarily traversed via footpaths and bridleways.

Long distance paths, and similar marked ways, may only be used briefly for linking together sections of your walk.

Whilst routes may traverse undulating terrain, they should not involve technical climbs .

Routes may include small villages and towns for re-supplying the trek.

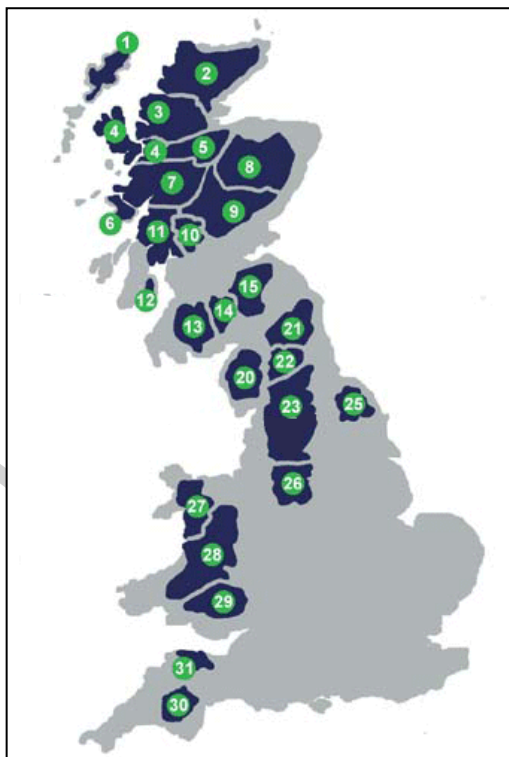
Classic areas include the New Forest and the Forest of Dean.

Wilderness

Wilderness is defined as the areas specifically mentioned below. Routes are expected to include some technical elements and may involve short periods at higher altitudes.

Long distance paths, and similar marked ways, may only be used briefly for linking together sections of your walk.

Routes may include small villages and towns for re-supplying the trek; However the general route should avoid habitation and take the participants out into unfamiliar, remote areas.



Wilderness Area	Description
1	Western Isles
2	Caithness and Sutherland
3	Ross and Cromarty
4	Skye and Lochalsh
5	Inverness
6	Isle of Mull
7	Lochaber and District
8	Grampian and Cairngorm
9	Tayside
10	Trossachs and Crianlarich
11	Lomond and Argyll
12	Isle of Arran
13	Galloway Hills
14	Lowther Hills
15	Scottish Borders
16	-----
17	-----
18	-----
19	-----
20	Cumbria - Lake District
21	Cheviots - Cheviot Hills, Border Forests
22	Durham Dales & High Pennines (Teesdale, Weardale, Allendale and West to Cross Fell)
23	Yorkshire Dales / Pennines - Langstrothdale to South Pennines
24	
25	North York moors and Cleveland Hills
26	Peak District
27	Snowdonia
28	Mid Wales
29	Beacons
30	Dartmoor
31	Exmoor and Quantock

B *Camping and Campsites*

Participants on the scheme must either camp in recognised campsites or use fields with the express permission of the land owner.
Rough camping is not permitted.

As well as obeying all the rules of the campsite, participants should ensure that their dogs behave well and are a credit to the AMWA.

C Day Backpacking Requirements

Level 1: Introduction to day backpacking

Prerequisites:	None
Terrain:	As determined by the AMWA backpacking weekend organisers.
Duration:	1 day
Total Distance:	6 to 10 miles
Notes:	It may be possible to loan a backpack.
Getting Started:	Contact the event organisers
The next step:	Day backpacking level 2

Level 2: Intermediate

Prerequisites:	Tutorial: Dog care Tutorial: Backpacking Techniques Optional: Day Backpacking level 1
Terrain:	Non-Wilderness
Duration:	1 day
Total Distance:	15 miles
Notes:	Whilst day backpacking level 1 is optional we strongly advise taking part on it.
Getting Started:	Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors
The next step:	Day backpacking level 3 OR Overnight backpacking level 1

Level 3: Wilderness

Prerequisites:	Day Backpacking level 2
Terrain:	Wilderness
Duration:	1 day
Total Distance:	13 miles
Notes:	An optional strong challenge for those wishing to excel at day backpacking Due to the difficulty of the terrain the total distance has been reduced .
Getting Started:	Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors
The next step:	Overnight backpacking level 1

D Overnight Backpacking Requirements

Level 1: Twenty five mile trek

Prerequisites: Refresher tutorial: Dog care¹
Refresher tutorial: Backpacking Techniques²
Day backpacking level 2

Terrain: Non-wilderness

Duration: 1 night

Total Distance: 25 miles

Notes: Self sufficient camping

Getting Started: Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors

The next step: Overnight backpacking level 2

Level 2: Forty mile trek

Prerequisites: Overnight Backpacking level 1

Terrain: Non-Wilderness

Duration: 2 nights

Total Distance: 40 miles

Notes: Self sufficient camping

Getting Started: Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors

The next step: Expedition backpacking level 1

¹ OPTIONAL unless a tutorial has not been attended within the last 2 years

² OPTIONAL unless a tutorial has not been attended within the last 2 years

E Expedition Backpacking Requirements

Level 1: Fifty mile trek

Prerequisites:	Tutorial: Dog first aid ¹ Overnight backpacking level 2
Terrain:	Wilderness
Duration:	3 - 4 nights
Total Distance:	50 miles
Notes:	Self sufficient camping
Getting Started:	Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors
The next step:	Expedition backpacking level 2

Level 2: Seventy five mile trek

Prerequisites:	Expedition Backpacking level 1
Terrain:	Wilderness
Duration:	5 - 6 nights
Total Distance:	75 miles
Notes:	Self sufficient camping
Getting Started:	Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors
The next step:	Expedition backpacking level 3

Level 3: One hundred mile trek

Prerequisites:	Expedition Backpacking level 2
Terrain:	Wilderness
Duration:	6 - 8 nights
Total Distance:	100 miles
Notes:	Self sufficient camping
Getting Started:	Submit your application and routes plan to the assessors
The next step:	None

¹ Alternatively applicants may attend a recognised course

F **Backpacking Conditions**

All participants must

- Carry one days emergency rations for all team members at all times *¹
- Pre-plan their route and have it agreed by the assessors before starting the award *²
- Cook their own food. Participants are allowed to share cooking between team members *¹
- Participants must not travel alone.
- Carry the mandatory items of the suggested equipment list. Equipment may be spread between themselves and their dogs. *²
- Submit reasonable proof that they have undertaken the award.
- Suitably train both themselves and their dogs so that all team members can safely and comfortably undertake the award. Participants must be fit enough to undertake the award and are aware that they may be traversing remote areas with minimal human contact and limited mobile phone reception. Participants should discuss the physical requirements of the award with their G.P. if they have any health problems.
- Ensure that the safety of themselves and their dogs is given top priority. Participants must withdraw from the award if they feel that their safety or health could be compromised.
- Operate within the spirit of the rules and conditions.
- Be aware that agreement of the route by the assessors does not mean that the participants are capable of doing the route, nor that it is safe to undertake. This is the responsibility of the participants and not of AMWA. Assessor acceptance of the route only means that it is of a suitable standard for the award being undertaken.

*¹ This does not apply to Day Backpacking awards

*² This does not apply to Day Backpacking Level 1.

G Suggested Equipment List

This is a guide to what to carry. Participants should make their own preparations and carry what they feel is necessary for the level of award being undertaken. Participants should ensure that they are adequately provisioned for extremes of weather. Note that overnight equipment is not mandatory for day backpacking level awards.

We strongly recommend that all participants have adequate insurance.

Mandatory Equipment

First aid kit (human and dog)

One days emergency rations for all team members

Backpacks (human and dog. Dog packs must be properly balanced under load)

Cooking, eating and washing up equipment¹

Tent²

A means of safely tethering your dogs overnight. Consider wild animals, even in campsites.³

Good boots

Foul weather equipment (even in summer).

Hydration supplies (dog and human). Water can be supplemented en-route

Map / route plan / guidance equipment ie:- a compass

Small, cheap digital camera or similar - to provide proof of doing the award

Equipment to consider

Dog booties (in case of excessive paw wear).

Emergency sun/rain shade (such as a lightweight tarpaulin and ropes)

Metal hammer - for hitting tent pegs in stony ground

High tensile tent pegs (to resist high winds)

¹ NOT mandatory for day backpacking level awards

² NOT mandatory for day backpacking level awards

³ NOT mandatory for day backpacking level awards

Torch
Mobile phone
Toiletries and towel (plus a dog towel - unless you want to share!)
Waterproof sheet for dog to sleep on.

Equipment to consider(Cont'd)

Map case
Dog brush
Spare strong bags and straps (to attach extra gear/food to your backpack)
Backpack waterproof liners (dog and human backpacks).
Spare clothing.
Sleeping bag / liner / mat
Suncream / hat
Money
Spare batteries
Pocket knife or similar
Emergency equipment - emergency shelter / space blanket / whistle /
warm and waterproof equipment
Personal clothing
Insurance

Points to consider

Split dog food into separate bags per meal. Double wrap each bag to stop water ingress.
Carry a dog brush to remove seeds from your dogs coat prior to fitting the pack.
When setting up camp try and site it near trees to string up tarpaulins for outside shelter.
A comfortable nights sleep is worth a little extra weight. Consider an inflatable, portable sleeping mat

H Award Application Process and Forms

Day Backpacking Level 1

As this is an introduction to backpacking, we ask that applicants complete the normal application form for attending one of AMWAs organised backpacking event.

Details of future events may be found in The Worker magazine and on AMWAs website (www.amwa.co.uk)

All other awards

Download the application form from AMWAs website, or request one from the AMWA Committee.

Complete the form as fully as possible and submit it to the assessors in either paper or electronic format to:

Paper Copies:

AMWA Assessors
Sadlers Cottage
30 The Street
Uley
Dursley
Glos
GL11 5SY

Electronic copies:

tencourtLtd@netscape.net

Whilst applicants may attempt an award at anytime that suits them we ask that you give the assessors at least 4 weeks notification before undertaking it.