



THE SPORT OF BARN HUNT^(SM)

By Cheryl Burman Sheridan

Who likes to Barn Hunt?Cavaliers!!!! How fun is it to Barn Hunt?Very!!!!

Barn Hunting is a rapidly growing sport that any dog with a nose can enjoy, even senior ones. If your dog likes to run around the yard chasing birds or little critters, then your dog has “prey drive” and would find this sport a BLAST! Picture dogs, one at a time, running around a maze of straw bales—poking their noses in the straw searching for the scent of a rat—and the thrill for them when they find a tube with a rat. Most importantly, no rats are harmed in the sport and there are very strict rules around the treatment of the rats. (We joke that they have their own rat union!) Yes, there are live rats that the dogs sniff out, but they are enclosed safely in aerated PVC tubes. No dog or handler will ever touch a live rat.



The object of Barn Hunt is to have tubes with rats hidden under the hay and your dog must locate and signal when they find each rat. When you think your dog has found a tube with a rat, you call out “RAT” very confidently and the judge will say yes or no. If yes, you restrain your dog and a rat wrangler comes and takes the tube or you can hand the tube off to the wrangler. If you’re wrong the judge will show your dog where one is hidden and the game is over. The other qualifiers are: All 4 paws must touch the top of a bale at some point and you need to send your dog through a tunnel within the course of straw bales. Depending on the level of competition, there are a different number of tubes, different levels of bale heights, and longer or shorter time allotted.



To teach your dog the sport of Barn Hunt, you first need to introduce him/her to the rats. Usually they are in a clear tube, ball, or some type of see-through container. In a competition the first level is called **Instinct**. Three tubes are placed out in the open (not hidden) within the course and your dog must indicate which one has the rat. Each dog has a very different way to signal when they’ve found a rat. My 7-year old Cavalier, Skye, scratches, bites, and barks at the tube which is quite obvious. You could say she loses her mind when she finds one!! Some dogs are more subtle and will tap the tube, stare, or sit by the tube. You, as the handler, need to figure out your dog’s signal. The next levels after Instinct are **Novice**, **Open**, **Senior**, and **Master**. Each level becomes progressively more difficult, with more tubes, longer tunnels

with curves, and taller configurations of straw bales. Some tubes are empty, some decoys have only rat bedding, and some have a rat. At the Master level you don’t know how many rats you are looking for; there are always 8 tubes but there could be anywhere between 1 and 5 rats. To watch a short **video** of Skye as she barn hunts, [click here](#).

If I may take a moment to brag, my Skye and I have participated in Barn Hunt for just 2 years, and she is the first Cavalier to obtain the Barn Hunt Association RAT Champion title called RATCH. To get your RATCH you must pass every level including the Master level, then accomplish 10 more Qs (qualifying runs). I am very proud of Skye but even more importantly, she has a BLAST searching out the critters!



For official rules and regulations and a list of sanctioned events, visit the Barn Hunt Association website at <http://www.barnhunt.com>. Course fees usually run between \$15—\$30 depending on the level. If you have questions or want more information, please feel free to reach out. My personal email is ttckcs@gmail.com.

If you’d like to try the sport or just observe, here are three local places and one for our Wisconsin GCCR friends:

<http://www.hsbarhunt.com> in Yorkville, IL

www.foryourkg.com Melrose Park, IL

<http://www.flintcreekdogs.com> Antioch, IL

<http://www.happyfeetagility.com> Oak Creek WI