

WORLD SHEEP DOG TRIALS FOOD & COUNTRY FESTIVAL 2011



World Sheep Dog Trials countdown gathers momentum

The countdown continues to the World Sheep Dog Trials, Food & Country Festival, which is being staged on the Lowther Estate, near Penrith in Cumbria, from September 15 to 18.

A total of 240 handlers and their dogs from 23 competing nations will compete in the 4th International Sheep Dog Society (ISDS) World Trials, which are being held in England for the first time.

Public interest in the four-day spectacle is also mounting for what is going to be one of the highlights in this year's Cumbrian events calendar. More than 40,000 people are expected to attend from all parts of the globe, pumping £millions into the regional economy.

On the eve of the World Trials on Wednesday, September 14, there will be a parade through the streets of Penrith. It will be headed by the Penrith Town Band, which will be followed by a horse-drawn carriage driven by 19-times world carriage-driving champion George Bowman and carrying the Earl and Countess of Lonsdale.

They will be followed by all the competing dogs and their handlers, who will be carrying their national flags. Many will also be dressed in national costume. Afterwards, they will all return to the trials site at Thrimby for a hog roast and live entertainment.

Starting at 8am on September 15 will be four days of sheep dog trials featuring the world's top dogs and their handlers, with the grand final taking place on Sunday, September 18. The trials will be supported by an action-packed Food & Country Festival, with something for all the family to enjoy.

Made in Cumbria will be running a food and craft marquee for its members, showcasing the best the county has to offer. It will also include a cookery theatre and the organisers are hoping to feature a number of celebrity chefs.

Sir Johnny Scott, celebrated countryman and one half of "Clarissa and the Countryman" book series, will be presenting demonstrations of carving, as well as doing some book signings.

There will also be a separate Country Festival marquee, which will shine the spotlight onto many country crafts and skills, among them dry stone walling, hedge laying, coracle making, rope making, wood turning, stick making, slate painting and pottery. It is also hoped to stage a farriery competition on the Saturday and Sunday.

There will also be stands promoting Herdwick and Rough Fell sheep, and Fell and Dales ponies. In the separate display arena, Fells ponies will be put through their paces to demonstrate their versatility and uses across the years.

There will also be a working sheep dog display from the back of a Fell pony by Cumbrian trialling legend Katy Cropper, to date the only woman winner of BBC TV's 'One Man and His Dog.' Sadly, Katy lost her original pony, so will be training a new one for this year's one series of presentations.

Other planned activities for the arena include lurcher racing, sheep dog demonstrations, gymnastics on horseback performed by 'Jive Pony,' together with displays of vintage tractors and horse-drawn carriages.

Tim Longton, ISDS English president and head of the World Trials organising committee, said: "The countdown to the 2011 World Trials is now well and truly on. This is going to be one of the biggest events of its kind ever seen in England and will prove of major interest not only to sheep dog enthusiasts, but also the public at large. It is an occasion not to be missed."

A full list of dogs by country has now been published on the World Trials website at www.worldsheepdogtrials.org

Advance tickets are now available for purchase online via a link on the World Trials website or through the ISDS at www.isds.org.uk or.

Major sponsors of the 2011 World Sheep Dog Trials include CSJ Specialist Canine Feeds, Gilbertson & Page, Penrith & District Farmers Mart, A.W. Jenkinson Forest Products, Lord Lonsdale, Eden District Council, Nigel Davis Solicitors, Armstrong Watson Accountants, Lloyds Land Rover and Katy Cropper.

Full details of remaining sponsorship opportunities can be obtained from World Trials secretary Clare Savins on 01931 712516, or by e-mail at clares09@btinternet.com.

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Pic caption: Renowned Cumbrian sheep dog handler Katy Cropper who will be putting on a display – from the back of a Fell pony! – at the 2011 World Sheep Dog Trials.

NB: If using pic, please credit Ruth Downing, Rural Pictures, Ashbourne, Derbyshire.

Further information: Competitors at the World Sheep Dog Trials will be coming from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Faroes, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and - for the first time – Japan and Brazil.

Qualifying rounds will take place on three separate fields on the first two days of the trials, with the top seven from each field on the opening days going forward to the semi-final on

Saturday. The top 16 of these qualify for the final on Sunday, from which a world champion will emerge.

Further info: World Trials PRO Robin Moule, Moule Media, on 01756-794027, mobile 07976-559961, e-mail: robin@moulemedia.com

Admission tickets for reader competitions will be made available nearer the date. If you would be interested in running a competition, please register your interest with Robin now – ditto if you are likely to require press badges for the World Trials.

For interviews, World Trials President Tim Longton can be contacted on 07968 313119 and Chairman Nigel Davis on 01524 784260.