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OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF 2011 ISDS WORLD SHEEP DOG TRIALS

Celebrities, hosts, working dog enthusiasts, current and potential sponsors rubbed shoulders as the whistle sounded to begin the countdown to the 2011 ISDS World Sheep Dog Trials, Food & Country Festival.

They are to be staged in England for the first time at Lowther Estates, near Penrith in Cumbria, from September 15-18, 2011.

With at least 30,000 visitors anticipated - public interest will be boosted with a Food & Country Festival promoting locally produced food and crafts - the regional economy can expect to receive a £2m-plus boost from next year's trials.

They are held every three years and are the peak for working sheep dog enthusiasts around the globe. In the quest to crown a new world champion, 240 of the planet's best handlers will trial some of the world's top dogs.

The official launch event was staged at The Punch Bowl Inn, Askham, (Thus, May 13) with the 2011 ISDS World Trials declared "open" by historian, broadcaster, columnist, countryside campaigner and Scottish Borders farmer Sir Johnny Scott.

Sir Johnny wrote and co-presented the BBC2 series "Clarissa and the Countryman" and writes for a variety of publications on field sports, food, farming, travel, history and the countryside.

He commented: "There is no animal quite like the sheep dog. In 1880, the Scottish poet and novelist James Hogg said: 'Without the shepherd's dog, the whole of the open mountainous land in Scotland would not be worth a sixpence.' This is not only as true today as it was then, but now applies in all parts of the world."

Another well-known guest speaker was Gus Dermody, the presenter and commentator for BBC2's "One Man and His Dog." Gus is a South Cheshire farmer who trains young dogs, presents sheep dog demonstrations and has also acted as announcer and commentator at recent English National and International Sheep Dog Trials – the 2009 International was held at Lowther Estates.

He said: "The pinnacle for sheep dog handlers is to represent their country and then go on to the World Trials. This flagship event deserves all the publicity it can get."

Organisation of the 4th ISDS World Sheep Dog Trials, administered by the International Sheep Dog Society (ISDS) and held at Lowther Park Farms Ltd by kind permission of the Lowther Estate Trust, is in the hands of a local committee.

2011 ISDS World Trials chairman Nigel Davis, of Burton-in-Kendal, who was secretary of the English National Sheep Dog Trials in 2008 and advisor to the local organising committee for last year's International Trials held at Lowther, announced that the Earl of Lonsdale, Hugh Clayton, and his wife Liz, had agreed to be patrons of the 2011 ISDS World Trials.

Norman Lorton, ISDS chief executive, said: "Our keynote aim remains to improve the shepherd's dog for the benefit and welfare of stock, and this ethos is spreading right across the world.

"Trialing is all about pitting wits and skills against a natural environment and for the 2011 ISDS World Trials at Lowther Estates we want to build on the heritage and success of the 2008 trials in Wales."

ISDS English president and renowned trialist Tim Longton, of Rooten Brook Farm, Quernmore, Lancaster, who is heading up the organising committee, said: "After the success of the previous three ISDS World Trials in Wales and Ireland, the pressure was on for the English to do the job!

"Lowther Estates has been very supportive of this event. The countryside around here is beautiful and we have accommodation providers to cater for the thousands of visitors from both at home and overseas. The ISDS World Trials are going to benefit the local economy in a big, big way."

Lowther Estates' Jim Lowther said: "We are honoured and really looking forward to hosting the 2011 ISDS World Trials. To coincide with them, we will be opening up Lowther Castle again to public access for the first time in 70 years.

"We want to invite the public to come and enjoy Lowther through a whole series of events. The ISDS World Trials will be the catalyst for this, including a major permanent replacement for Lowther Show in 2012." The annual event was last held in 2008.

The debut English ISDS World Trials will cost around £200,000 to stage and the first major sponsor was introduced at the launch event - Ceri Rundle, of CSJ Specialist Canine Feeds, Bwlch Isaf Farm, Bodfari, Denbighshire.

The company, one of the fastest growing brands of natural canine feeds, herbal supplements and treats, used by many top dog handlers, also sponsored the 2008 ISDS World Sheep Dog Trials in Wales.

Ceri – her father H. Glyn Jones is a former International Supreme and Reserve Supreme Champion – was the first lady to appear on One Man & His Dog, the first to qualify for the Welsh National team and the first to be elected on to the panel of national judges for Wales. Herself an international and world trialist, she has since adjudicated in Europe, Scandinavia and the USA.

Support opportunities are available for 2011 ISDS World Trials. They include major sponsorship roles, trial field displays, trade stands and programme advertising. Full details and sponsorship packs are available from World Trials secretary Clare Savins on 01931 712516, e-mail clares09@btinternet.com

Tim Longton can be contacted at timothylongton@tinyworld.co.uk and Nigel Davis at nigeldavis@agriculturalsolicitors.co.uk The 2011 ISDS World Trials website is www.worldsheepdogtrials.org



Pictured at the official launch of the 2011 ISDS World Sheep Dog Trials, Food & Country Festival are, standing, Lowther Estates' Jim Lowther, left, and organising committee chairman Nigel Davis. Seated, ISDS chairman Jim Easton, left, and Tim Longton, ISDS English president and head of the organising committee, with his dog Carrie – the duo have represented the English National team on several occasions.



Pictured at the official launch of the 2011 ISDS World Sheep Dog Trials, Food & Country Festival are, standing, from left, One Man and his Dog's Gus Dermody, Tim Longton, ISDS English president and head of the organising committee, and chairman Nigel Davis. Seated, official opener Sir Johnny Scott, right, and the first major sponsor of the 2011 trials, Ceri Rundle, of CSJ Specialist Canine Feeds.

Thank you to Ruth Downing, Rural Pictures, Ashbourne, Derbyshire for the photographs.

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For interviews, Tim Longton can be contacted on 07968 313119. World Trials chairman is Burton-in-Kendal agricultural solicitor Nigel Davis on 01524 784260 and secretary Clare Savins on 01931 712516, e-mail clares09@btinternet.com