

Coon dogs, hunters v

By CHARLES ABBOTT
J-T Staff Writer

If the sound of barking dogs can be heard in the woods around Blackwell Saturday night, don't be alarmed. It will probably be coon dogs on the trail of a raccoon — or treeing a raccoon.

The reason? The United Kennel Club in Blackwell is holding a night hunt beginning at 8 with hunters gathering at the fairgrounds and going their separate ways for the hunt.

It's all part of the local club's bench show at the fairgrounds, scheduled for 4 p.m. Saturday, followed by the hunt. Participating hunters must be signed up by 8 p.m., the start of the hunt.

The night hunt will originate at the horticulture building.

Points will be awarded for specific areas, including those to dogs that "tree" first. If there is no coon in a tree, a minus (0) point will be given.

According to club members, dogs are not allowed to hurt a coon during the hunt in any way.

There will be a two-hour hunt limit with hunters due back at the fairgrounds by 3 a.m., but the hunters must use the full two hours of hunting time.

Hunting with a time limit is not an easy thing to do, according to coon hunters. They say it's easy to lose track of the time on a hunt. A hunt could last all night.

After the 3 a.m. deadline for the hunt to end, breakfast will be served at the horticulture building.

"We hope to have a bench show clinic for the public," said club president Jimmy Rhea.

Rhea explained that a bench show teaches handlers how to compete in a dog show and how the dog should be handled for a show performance.

The dogs are put in a ring and the owners walk their animals around the ring and then put them on a bench for showing.

About 50 dogs are expected for the bench show-night hunt, including dogs from Oklahoma and some towns in Kansas.

"Only UKC dogs can take part," said Rhea.

Plaques will be awarded, from the grand champion award to awards for the best of breed and in various classes, according to Rhea.

Breeds expected to participate include Black/Tan, Blue Tick, English, Red Bone, Treeing and Walkers.

"These breeds have all be registered with the UKC," said Rhea.

Coon hunting goes back to America's pioneer days. Matter of fact, UKC registration for the Black/Tan breeds expected for Saturday's hunt, dates back to 1900, Rhea said. The Walker breeds were registered in 1945.

Blackwell's coon hunters club is the Three Rivers Coon Hunting Association, started here last September.

Local membership currently stands at 54. That includes members from this area of the state, as well as points in Kansas.

In addition to Rhea, vice president is Ron Miller, secretary-treasurer is Lesley Miller. There are five board members, Susan Rhea, Brandt Ward, Mike Williamson, Bill Ward and Richard Claypole.

DEQ calls public meeting Thursday

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be hosting a public meeting on Thursday, Aug. 6, at 6:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of City Hall at 221 W. Blackwell.

The purpose of the meeting will be to present to the public DEQ's proposed plan to address contaminated-shallow groundwater in the Blackwell area.

In addition, DEQ will receive comment from the public regarding the plan.

The proposed plan will focus in the alternative being considered to address elevated metals concentra-

tions found in shallow groundwater which underlies the old zinc smelter and extends in a southeasterly direction, beneath ground, to Ferguson

Avenue. This groundwater is not presently a drinking water source for any citizens, nor does it impact the Blackwell public water supply.

The public is encouraged to comment on the proposed plan. Comments may be submitted in writing or given orally at the public meeting. Written comments should be addressed to Deborah McNaughton, DEQ, P.O. Box 1677, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-1677.