

MINUTES OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 23 JUNE 2011

PRESENT:

Mr D Ray	Midlands
Mr R Jordan	Midlands
Mrs J Nero	North East
Mrs P Baltes	North West
Mr M Hallam	North West
Mr S Chandler	South East and East Anglia
Mr J Gilbert	South East and East Anglia
Mr T Griffin	South and South West
Miss L Olden	South and South West
Mr M Shaw	Wales

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr S Croxford	Activities Sub-Committee & General Committee Member
Miss D Deuchar	Manager – Working Dog Activities
Miss J Nosalik	Specialist – WTOA

IN THE CHAIR: Mr D Ray

The Chairman welcomed Mr Croxford to the meeting and advised the Council that there would not be a Question Time Panel as the new Kennel Club Chairman had previous work commitments prior to being elected.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies had been received from Mrs M Kelly, representing Scotland, Mr I Mallabar, representing the North East and Mr R McAleese, representing Northern Ireland.

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2011 were signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

ITEM 3. MATTERS ARISING

Results of Recommendations

3. The Council noted the Agility Code of Conduct had been approved by the General Committee at its meeting on 19 April 2011.

Judging of Dogs Owned by Spouses and Close Relatives in Agility

4. The Council noted that the General Committee did not approve an amendment to Regulation H27.a and that it would come into effect from 1st January 2012. The Chairman explained to the Council that despite many competitors being opposed to the new regulation, the Activities Sub-Committee, which consists of representatives from a range of working dog disciplines, ruled in favour of the proposal. It was stated that the Sub-Committee and General Committee made decisions in a democratic way and that it was always in the best interests of the working dog disciplines.
5. A heated discussion took place, reiterating the agility community's grievances and possible problems that may arise for judges and show organisers. The Kennel Club was accused of not listening to the agility community's objections and it was stressed that many have since questioned the discipline's future relationship with the Kennel Club. It was felt that the competitors were particularly disappointed by the timing and the manner in which the new regulation was announced.
6. The Council was reminded that when the proposed Agility Control Test was discussed, the large opposition to its implementation led to the proposal being amended into a set of guidelines in the form of the Agility Code of Conduct, which showed that the Kennel Club did listen to all those involved in its activities. It was emphasised that should the predicted problems arise after the regulation has taken effect, it would be reviewed again.

Agility Strategic Direction

7. The Council noted a verbal report on the progress of the Agility Strategy Working Party and noted the proposal to introduce a new level of club recognition and new lower level competitions. Details of these proposals were tabled at the meeting. The Championship and Premier Open categories reflected the current Kennel Club licensed Championship and Open shows, whereas Games, Limited and Open reflected a new variety of show options. The office outlined the consultation process which included meetings with agility show organisers from both Kennel Club registered societies and independent organisations, as well as views from those who process show entries. The principles of the proposals had been met with general approval. The meeting had been a success and it was agreed that the new proposed registration for agility clubs and the new format of Kennel Club licensed agility shows, could potentially be implemented ready for January 2012.

(Annex A refers)

8. A discussion took place during which a few concerns were raised regarding safeguarding the position of existing registered societies, and it was confirmed that they would continue to enjoy the range of activities already on offer together with eligibility to organise the new low level competitions if they so wished.

9. The definition of a capped class was queried and it was stated that a capped class would be set at one universal number which would help those societies which had space constraints at their show venues and would help show organisers manage their entry. The Chairman emphasised that the proposals were a positive step forward for the agility discipline and was pleased with the Kennel Club's willingness to modernise. The Council was also invited to note that the office would welcome any feedback or suggestions, which should be submitted by the end of July 2011.

International Agility Teams

10. The Council noted a written report from Mr Partridge, European Open and World Championships Team Manager.

Proposed Amendment of Regulation H(1)(B)3.k (Weaving Poles)

11. Mr Chandler, on behalf of Mr Jolly, a private individual, proposed the amendment of the above regulation. Miss Olden seconded the proposal. The Council reported a broad agreement in favour of the amended proposal. It was stated that the measurement between the poles should be taken at the base of the weave poles. A discussion took place regarding when the regulation should be implemented, taking into account health and safety, as well as the concerns of equipment manufacturers. Since the amended proposal already reflected a measurement within the existing regulation, it was felt that it should be recommended for 1st January 2012.
12. The Council also reported unanimous support for the regulation to stipulate that the weave poles should have alternate support bars. The Council therefore **recommended** the following amendment to Regulation H(1)(B)3.k:

FROM:

Weaving Poles—The minimum number of poles should be five and the maximum number 12 and they should be in a continuous line, as straight as possible. They should be a minimum of 457mm (1ft 6ins) and a maximum of 609mm (2ft) apart, between the poles. The poles must be of rigid construction and with a minimum height of 762mm (2ft 6ins) and a diameter between 19mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in) and 38mm (1½ ins).

TO:

Weaving Poles—The minimum number of poles should be five and the maximum number 12 and they should be in a continuous line, as straight as possible and should be 600mm (1ft 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ ins) apart (between the poles). The poles must be of rigid construction and with a minimum height of 762mm (2ft 6ins) and a diameter between 32mm (1¼ in) and 38mm (1½ ins).

(Amendments underlined)

A further addition to Regulation H(1)(B)3.k was also **recommended**:

TO:

(Insert new paragraph)

The base must have support bars at the bottom of each pole and they must be positioned away from the side a dog would normally negotiate each pole.

(Insertion underlined)

New Regulation H(1)(B)3.m (Equipment Sizes in Special Classes)

13. Mr Ray, on behalf of Ms Brown, a private individual, proposed the addition to the above regulation. Mr Hallam seconded the proposal. A brief discussion took place including whether all obstacles should have the option to be lowered, but it was felt that for the welfare of the dogs, the only obstacles which could be reduced should be those as defined in the proposed regulation. The majority were in favour of the proposal and, therefore, the following wording was **recommended**:

FROM:

Societies may schedule classes other than those defined below. The eligibility for “Special” classes must be defined by the Society and included in the schedule. The word “Special” must be included in the title of the class.

TO:

Societies may schedule classes other than those defined below. The eligibility for “Special” classes must be defined by the Society and included in the schedule. The word “Special” must be included in the title of the class. Where “Special” classes are classified for older and/or inexperienced dogs, the height of the hurdles, the A-ramp and the length of the long jump may be reduced below the dimensions specified in these regulations, in which case such dimensions must be included in the class definition in the schedule.

(Amendment underlined)

Running Orders - Regulation H(1)10.f

14. Mr Ray proposed the amendment of the above regulation. Mr Gilbert seconded the proposal. The Council gave a mixture of feedback regarding the proposal, concerns being, how to define a competitor running close to a running order as well as the difficulty of being available for smaller classes with multiple dogs. The Chairman reiterated that the amendment was simply to add clarity to an existing regulation. It was felt that the majority of competitors were available for their class and running order, but that there were a few competitors who ignored the regulation.

15. It was agreed that the amended regulation would remind competitors, and especially ring managers, that they may use their discretion to report competitors who were deliberately running out of order. The majority were in support and the following wording was **recommended** as an amendment to Regulation H(1)10.f:

FROM:

It is the competitor's responsibility to be available for their class and running order.

TO:

It is the competitor's responsibility to be available for their class and running order. Competitors must run as close to their running order as possible. Failure to do so may be reported to the Kennel Club.
(Amendment underlined)

Course Times

16. The Council was invited to note that speed boundaries for each agility level were stipulated overseas in order to calculate suitable course times and it was felt that a similar approach should be adopted for Kennel Club licensed shows. It was agreed that the use of a wheel to measure a course would be more accurate and it would remove any pressure on the judge. The Council was very much in support of research being undertaken by some accredited trainers to establish the correct method of calculating course times and welcomed the findings for its next meeting.

Quality Control on Measurers

17. The Council noted that there was a lack of feedback for this issue. There had been reports of a few discrepancies over some measurements of dogs and, therefore, it was suggested that a method to conduct quality control would be for a chosen measurer to do a spot check on a measuring session. However, it was acknowledged that this would be difficult to monitor, thus the Council agreed to leave the matter, but welcomed suggestions in the future.

ITEM 4. AGILITY GRADING REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Agility Grading System

18. Mr Ray proposed the amendments to the grading system. Mr Chandler seconded the proposal. It was noted that there had originally been little feedback for the Agility Grading Review Working Party and, therefore, the proposals on the agenda were a reflection of show statistics as well as the suggestions that had been put forward. The Council expressed its views on the Working Party's proposals and stated that it had since received many suggestions from competitors. It was felt that competitors were generally content with some sections of the proposals, but that they required further discussion, thus it was

requested that the item be altered to a discussion item. The Working Party members stated that there was no rush to implement changes and welcomed further consideration. On this basis, the Council discussed at length the feedback which had been received and requested the Working Party to consider the following points at its next meeting:

- Consideration for all geographic regions and the numbers of dogs in each grade and height category.
- The “Bottleneck” in Grade 3 would not be as large if dogs did not progress from Grade 2 to 3 by default due to another dog progressing.
- To raise the criteria for progression from Grade 4 to 5 by including a requirement for one agility win.
- The level of warrant points required to progress should be raised.
- To progress to Grade 7, one of the required agility wins should be in a combined standard class which includes Grade 7 dogs i.e. Combined 6-7, Combined 1-7 etc.
- A form of qualifying period and/or eligibility criteria to compete in Championship Classes to show that dogs are still competitive at that level and it would make Grade 7 classes more competitive.
- To consider the annual rolling points system as used by the obedience discipline for eligibility for the Championship Class, which was self policing, but effective.

19. It was agreed that any proposals for the next agenda should be to preserve the quality not the quantity of dogs in the higher grades. It was also reiterated that better guidelines on course times would prevent some from progressing too quickly. The Council agreed to defer the matter back to the Working Party and the Chairman thanked the members for the work that had been done thus far.

H(1)9.f. (Management)

20. Mrs Baltès proposed the amendment to the above regulation. Mr Gilbert seconded the proposal. The Council was opposed to the current wording stating that the number of entries required before a class had to be split was too low and that it was not a problem in the northern regions as entries were lower and classes were often split. Mr Griffin proposed an amendment to the wording to state that a class had to be split once the number of entries had reached 300. Mr Jordan seconded the amendment to the proposal. The majority of the Council voted in favour of the amendment and recommended the following wording:

FROM:

Where combined classes are split, they must be split into parts of equal numbers (to within one dog). Splits must be conducted on a random basis. Where graded classes are split, they must be split by grade. If a subsequent grade or single grade class is split, they must be split into parts of equal numbers (to within one dog). Splits must be conducted

on a random basis. Competitors entered therein must be notified of all changes.

TO:

At the closing date of entries, if entries for any one class or grade exceed 300, the class must be split, no part must exceed 300 entries. Where graded or combined classes are split, they must be split into parts of equal numbers (to within one dog). Splits must be conducted on a random basis. Where graded classes are split, they must be split by grade. If a subsequent grade or single grade class is split, they must be split into parts of equal numbers (to within one dog). Splits must be conducted on a random basis. Competitors entered therein must be notified of all changes.
(Amendments underlined)

21. The Council also requested the office to issue guidance that 300 was the maximum number before a class must be split, but that show societies may split their classes with smaller entries if they wished.

ITEM 5. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

22. The Chairman reminded the Council Representatives that they were invited to propose further items to the Council's five year strategic plan.

ITEM 6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Changes to the Marking Used for the Crufts Team Competition – Ms Trudy Swann

23. The Council was requested to discuss the marking procedure used in the Crufts Team Competition and it was agreed that dogs should continue to be marked, even after an elimination. The Council **recommended** that the amendment to judges' marking should be adopted for the final at Crufts 2012 and then for all the heats thereafter.

ITEM 7. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

24. Mr Ray gave a verbal report on arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival to be held at Kelmarsh Hall on 12-14 August 2011. It was noted that a similar number of camping pitches had been reserved and that there would be an amended layout for the trade stands and show official area.

ITEM 8. JUDGES WORKING PARTY (WTOA)

25. A written report was provided by Mr Jolly and Mr Chandler gave a verbal report on the progress of the Judges Working Party. It was noted that a mentoring system for first time judges had been considered, but as yet, a workable system has not been established and, therefore, further discussion would be required at the Annual Accredited Trainers' Seminar later in the year.
26. It was also noted that discussions had taken place regarding the judges' complaints procedure and that guidelines were being drawn up to tackle poor judging performance.

ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Non Adherence to Regulations

27. Concerns were raised that recently some judges had not been judging to the regulations. Concerns included handlers being faulted for jumping over or going under a piece of equipment, without touching it which is not regarded as a fault. Furthermore, some judges have stipulated in their briefings that all re-runs would be from scratch regardless of any faults previously gained. The office confirmed that re-runs should be at the discretion of the judge on an individual basis and that a press release would be issued reminding judges of adhering to the regulations.

Kennel Club Objectives

28. It was stated that one of the Kennel Club objectives was to encourage more people to provide input in the Kennel Club's decision making process. Due to recent decisions leaving the agility community disheartened, it was requested that the Agility Liaison Council have more input in the decision making process. It was requested that any agility matters should have the opportunity to be discussed by competitors and feedback should be encouraged. Additionally, better channels of communication through the internet should be embraced.

Contact Surface and Weave Distances

29. Concerns were raised that some shows had begun using a mixture of rubber and non-rubber contacts, as well as weaves that differed in distance between the poles in different rings. This had lead to a perceived change in performance from some dogs because they reacted differently to a change of surface or distance. The Council recommended a press release be issued requesting show societies to specify in show schedules, where possible, the types of contacts and equipment supplier they plan to use at their show or in a particular class so that competitors may be forewarned.

- Health and Welfare Working Party
30. Mr Croxford informed the Council of a proposal to form a Health and Welfare Working Party to address the possible risks involved for dogs in all the activity disciplines. The proposal is due to be discussed by the General Committee at its next meeting. The Working Party would be comprised of a panel of experts for various canine activities as well as suitably qualified individuals. It was noted that the results of any findings would be referred to the Council for discussion. The Council welcomed the initiative and thanked Mr Croxford for his work on the matter.

ITEM 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

31. The date of the next meeting will be in early January 2012 and will be confirmed in September 2011.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 14:40pm.

D RAY
Chairman

Agility Liaison Council Representatives
1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012

Listed below are the Area Liaison Council Representatives that can be contacted should further information be required on any of the items included on the minutes.

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