

Dog Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group Report

The Sub-Group met on 4th February 2013 and made progress on a number of issues tabled at previous meetings. Included on the agenda was the issue of jumping & jump heights, this has been under review by the Sub-Group since the inaugural meeting held in late 2011. Some initial and informal research work has been underway since then and the group was updated on progress so far.

The Chairman presented a paper summarising discussion points raised by people with a range of views on the subject of jump heights relating to Kennel Club Regulated Agility competitions. In addition a number of interested parties were invited to speak directly to the Sub-Group at the meeting.

All the presentations had common themes and highlighted the many different issues involved which included: breed of dog, personality, nutrition, rest/warm up length/frequency, environment, conformation, surface, training, handler, etc. The focus of the presentations made in favour of regulation changes can be summarised as risk management, general welfare and what were presented as anomalies in current Kennel Club regulations regarding the ratio of jump height to dog height for some dogs.

The Sub-Group accepted that there were some dogs that might benefit from the introduction of different jump heights. However, of particular concern was the large population of dogs currently competing in Kennel Club regulated events and the lack of available information, and evidence about how these dogs might be affected by the proposed changes.

Following a wide-ranging discussion within the Sub-Group it was agreed there is a general lack of conclusive scientific evidence to support any of the positions being adopted. Having taken into account all the evidence available before and the presentations made at the meeting, the Sub-Group agreed it was not in a position to support any recommendations to make regulation changes affecting jump heights without further research being undertaken. (This point and the implications of it will be raised by the Chairman as part of his update to the next Activities Sub-Committee meeting in April).

The Sub-Group also discussed the need to develop a framework or a range of research studies to include; the dog's jumping action, jump heights (not confined to a single jump height or category of dog) and the associated implications of possible changes on performance generally. The plan for this work, resources, timescales and costs, (to include the informal study already underway) will be discussed and agreed at the Sub-Group's June meeting.