

**MEETING OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON
22 JANUARY 2014 AT 10.30AM IN THE BOARDROOM AT CLARGES STREET**

AGENDA

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2013 (copies previously distributed).

ITEM 3. ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME PRESENTATION

The Council is invited to note a presentation by Mr B Lambert, Health and Breeder Services Manager, on the progress of the Assured Breeder Scheme.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Regulation Changes

- a. The Council is invited to note that, at its meeting on 8 October 2013, the General Committee approved the following changes to the regulations, with effect from 1 January 2014:
- i. New Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(4) – Calculating accurate course times
 - ii. Grammatical amendments to Regulation H(1)(B)5.b (Marking)
 - iii. Amendments to Regulation H(1)(B)3.n. (See-Saw) and Regulation H(1)(B)3.o. (Dog Walk)
 - iv. Amendment to Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(3) – Removal of finishing poles
 - v. New Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(6) (Electronic Timing Gates) - Positioning
 - vi. New Regulation H(1)10.g. (Competing) – Definition of when deemed under test
 - vii. New Regulation H(1)(B)5.a.(13) (Marking) – Dog starting prior to instruction / running past first obstacle

Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group

- b. The Council is invited to note a written report on the progress of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group following a meeting on 11 December 2013.
(Annex A – to be tabled)

International Agility Teams

- c. The Council is invited to note the report on Team GB's attendance at the 2013 European Open Championships.
(Annex B refers)

Proposed Amendment of Regulation H18.a. (Approval of Judges)

- d. At its last meeting in June 2013, the Council noted that the Sub-Committee agreed to consider a proposal, to state that individuals should be able to apply for approval to award Championship Certificates, without necessarily having been nominated by a Championship society first. The Council is requested to discuss an amendment to Regulation H18.a. as prepared by the Chairman as follows:

TO

...Individuals may apply to the General Committee for approval to award Championship Agility Certificates for the first time, provided that the judge has fulfilled the minimum criteria in accordance with Regulation H18.b. Subject to approval judges would be included on the list of Approved Championship Agility Judges.

(Addition underlined)

Agility Equipment Specifications

- e. At its last meeting, the Council agreed that a regulation would be beneficial to ensure equipment suppliers consulted the Kennel Club over any fundamental design changes to agility equipment. The Council is therefore requested to discuss these matters as well as consider a proposal prepared by Mrs Croxford as follows:

Regulation H(1)(B)3. Obstacles

TO

Obstacles. – The following obstacles meet with the approval of the Committee of the Kennel Club. ~~However, organisers may submit other obstacles for approval, if desired.~~ Any changes to current obstacles (such as materials used, structure or style) or any other new obstacles must be submitted for approval by the Kennel Club before being made available for use at its licensed events.

(Addition underlined)

Additionally, at its meeting on 24 September 2013, the Sub-Committee requested the Council discuss the matter of who should be responsible for agility equipment meeting the correct specifications at a show.

Securing the Pipe Tunnel – Dog Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group

- f. At its last meeting it was agreed that a regulation should be introduced to stipulate how the pipe tunnel should be secured to ensure the diameter of the tunnel did not reduce below the recommended minimum as a result of securing straps being over tightened. Mr Gilbert prepared a discussion item for consideration instead of a proposal since a firm proposal is considered to be too difficult to stipulate at this stage. The Council is requested to consider the prepared document, “Guidance for Securing Pipe Tunnels – Methods and Practices” which would aim to influence the agility community to secure tunnels in a way that would meet current regulations and subsequently, prevent potential concerns over reduced diameters at many shows.

(Annex C refers)

ITEM 5. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)2.

- a. Mrs Croxford proposes the following amendment in relation to the first point on the Council's strategy, from June 2013's meeting, regarding whether agility should remain a fun competition as currently stated in the regulations, or be recognised as a sporting activity. Mrs Croxford suggests that although it is important to highlight the enjoyment of the discipline, the regulations should recognise the advancement of agility as a sporting activity as well as the dog as an athlete. This would also support the discipline's position should the Kennel Club re-approach the Sports Council for official recognition in the future. The amendment is proposed as follows:

TO

~~Agility Shows are considered to be "fun competitions" designed for enjoyment by competitors, their dogs and for appeal to spectators.~~ Agility Shows are considered a sporting activity for handlers and their dogs, of which the dogs must be Fit for Function. They can have an element of fun classes which will appeal to competitors, dogs and spectators. Informality is encouraged and maximum discretion is granted to Societies within the constraints of safety and these Regulations. Nothing may be included in an Agility Show which could endanger the safety of the dogs competing, the handlers or the spectators.

(Addition underlined)

Role of the Agility Liaison Council

- b. At its last meeting in June 2013, the Council discussed its own role as an advisory body and stated it should establish how it envisaged the future direction of agility. It was agreed that the main objective of the meeting would be to focus on these matters due to the scale of the project. As a means of becoming more proactive and driving competitors to focus on the long-term objectives of the discipline to create a positive yet substantial impact for the future, the Council is invited to review the following topics which were suggested at the last meeting as areas for discussion, together with the previously compiled list as well as a few new additional points:
- i. That Kennel Club agility be at the forefront of agility in the world.
 - ii. To develop Kennel Club agility as a more attractive product to newcomers, increase numbers in the sport, as well as looking after its customer base; consideration of a results database, more recognition of its competitors and more achievements rewarded.
 - iii. That registered clubs be better protected; to recognise that these clubs are mainly voluntary and to seek ways to create enterprise opportunities to attract/retain membership.
 - iv. To protect and encourage more support for Premier and Championship shows; to encourage existing competitors to give more back to the sport in general to protect the longevity of the discipline.
 - v. To evaluate the permitted number of licences issued per show society.
 - vi. To create more channels of communication with a wider audience.

- vii. To acknowledge the changes in agility over the years and recognise the impact of the economy on show societies/competitors.
- viii. Judges' Mentoring Programme for all judges – under development.
- ix. To improve the standard of judges; consideration of tougher requirements to become eligible to fulfil an appointment, or possible creation of a new level of judge such as "Premier Judge".
- x. To establish how competitors envisage the future of agility and how they want to see it developed.
- xi. To suggest recording a dog's actual height measurement rather than, as at present, placing a dog into its relevant height category.
- xii. The role of the Agility Liaison Council and its interaction with other Kennel Club Committees; to improve communication channels or consider a better structure.
- xiii. To set up an Equipment Panel to liaise with manufacturers and suppliers of agility equipment, and address/discuss any concerns.
- xiv. To consider establishing an approved list of show equipment hirers.

ITEM 6. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Miss J North

Mr M Hallam

- a. Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)9.a. (Management)

TO

Test area shall have a suitable surface and measure a minimum of 32m x 32m (35yds x 35yds) for outdoor venues. Indoor venues may be smaller but must be appropriate to the size of the test. The test area to be fully enclosed with access and exit provided with suitable flexible fencing which will not allow a dog to enter or exit while competing.

(Addition underlined)

This regulation amendment is proposed to ensure dogs remain within the ring and, therefore, help prevent the possibility of an incident taking place. It is suggested that given the number of incidents reported, the majority take place in the ring vicinity. Miss North states that this is already common practice at many indoor shows due to the restricted space and lack of gangways. She explains that although the amendment is not intended to encourage owners to enter dogs of a poor temperament into the competition ring, the stipulation would prevent the risk of potential injuries since the fencing would keep all parties separated. Miss North also emphasises that any dog attempting to lunge at another dog should still be reported in the Kennel Club incident book, but this regulation would help prevent the escalation of any potential incidents.

b. Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)9.e. (Management)

TO

The maximum number of individual runs a person shall judge on one day is ~~450~~ 350, excluding unforeseen eventualities such as re-runs...
(Amendment underlined)

Mr Huckle has proposed the above regulation amendment stating that the current number is too large for a person to judge in one day. It is suggested that such a number requires a person to judge for approximately nine hours with an efficient ring party, little or no course design changes and/or no problems occurring during the day. The current number is considered unfair for a judge due to the constant level of concentration required which is mentally exhausting and, therefore, 350 dogs has been proposed as a more manageable number.

ITEM 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Standard Class Equipment – Mr M Bacon

- a. Mr Bacon requests the Council discuss the issue of the Weaving Poles and contact equipment sometimes being omitted in standard classes, and to consider the possibility of enforcing their use. Mr Bacon explains that there have been several Open level agility shows that have been held in indoor venues particularly, which have omitted some contact equipment in the agility classes and Weaving Poles from the jumping classes. This can result in dogs progressing through the grades without having been required to negotiate some of the more challenging obstacles and questions whether this is fair or even safe for when they reach the higher grades. It is suggested that should Open or Limited type agility shows increase as a result of the creation of Listed Status making it easier to hold Kennel Club licensed shows, the use of indoor venues could increase as well due to the more manageable entry numbers. Subsequently, the omission of certain obstacles may become more frequent due to the potential restrictions put in place by the indoor venue management such as disallowing the staking of obstacles to the ground due to the potential damage to the arena surface.

Mr Bacon states that there is equipment available to resolve the concerns surrounding potential damage to the arena surface. Examples include Weaving Poles with short spikes on the underside of the base which prevent the obstacle from moving yet are not long enough to damage the arena membrane, or alternatively a heavier base could be used. For contact equipment such as the See-Saw, a heavier base or sandbags may be used. Mr Bacon requests the Council consider the following suggestions to address the issue of equipment not being used:

- i. Weaving Poles, and all contact equipment (A Frame, Dog walk and Seesaw) must be included in all standard agility classes.

- ii. Weaving Poles must be included in all standard jumping classes.

Mr Bacon suggests that classes that do not comply with either one of the two proposals would be defined as Special classes in the schedule. Similar to the Championship Class, Regulation H(1)(B)1a.(2)(iv) would apply to standard classes, "In the event of extreme adverse weather conditions at a show a Judge, with the full agreement of the Competition Manager, may alter the compulsory equipment as deemed appropriate at the time. Any alteration to the equipment must be reported by the show management to the Kennel Club within 14 days of the date of the show."

Training in the Ring for Lower Grades – Mrs P Elms

- b. Mrs Elms requests the Council discuss the possibility of permitting beginner handlers and/or experienced handlers with young dogs to have the option to run their dog in a non-competitive capacity as a means of getting acquainted with the competition environment prior to running for competition. Mrs Elms explains that running in a competitive environment for the first time can be stressful for both the handler and dog alike and, therefore, this permission would allow beginner handlers/dogs to build confidence before running competitively. It is considered that although clubs try to simulate a "show environment" in training, it does not truly reflect or accurately compare to a Kennel Club licensed event.

Mrs Elms suggests that should this permission be granted, it should be restricted to Grades 1-3 which would give beginner handlers/dogs the opportunity to adapt to the competition environment, improve performance and learn to negotiate courses effectively. It is stressed that it should not include the higher grades since they have enough experience not to practice in the ring and any such attempts should be discouraged. Additionally, the time the dog and handler have on the course could be restricted to the stipulated course time, after which they would be asked to leave the ring. The scribe sheets would be marked as "Not For Competition" and runs of this nature could be held towards the end of the class. Alternatively dogs could run as near as possible to their running order, but the judge would be informed before the round began. Judges would not be required to mark the round, but expected to observe the dog at all times as a matter of safety. Mrs Elms is of the view that permitting these types of runs may result in less time being wasted in the ring, since competitors opting for a training round would be restricted to the course time.

Eligibility for Grades 1-3 – Mr C Huckle

- c. Mr Huckle requests the Council discuss the possibility of clarifying the regulations for the eligibility of Grades 1, 2 and 3 since they are perceived to be ambiguous. Due to the eligibility being based on owners, handlers and dogs at the lower grades, it has led to many competitors misinterpreting the regulations and inadvertently entering in the incorrect grade. It is also considered that some handlers who are Grade 3 or higher have misunderstood which classes they may enter a Grade 1 or 2 dog for competition.

ITEM 8. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

To note a written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held on 8-10 August 2014.

(Annex D refers)

ITEM 9. JUDGES WORKING PARTY (WTOA)

To note a written report on the progress of the Judges Working Party following its meeting on 26 November 2013.

(Annex E – to be tabled)

ITEM 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be 3 July 2014 and any items must be submitted by 4 April 2014.

NOTES:

1. *The Kennel Club will reimburse standard rail fares to all representatives attending the meeting, from their addresses as recorded at the Kennel Club. Claim forms will be available at the meeting.*
2. *Those resident in Northern Ireland or Scotland may apply in advance for authority to substitute shuttle air travel for standard rail fare. Although it is requested that tickets are booked well in advance to take advantage of any reduction in fares.*
3. *Please give advance notice of matters to be raised under 'Any Other Business'. This assists the Office if research is required. These items are discussed at the discretion of the Council.*
4. *Kennel Club Liaison Council Regulations state that the Kennel Club will bear the cost of all reasonable and externally incurred costs connected with a Council, if agreed in advance. Therefore, representatives should apply to the Kennel Club for approval of any costs they may wish to claim prior to the expense being incurred.*

THE KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

“To raise the relevance of the Kennel Club in the eyes of the public at large, dog owners and those who take part in canine events, so as to be better able ‘to *promote in every way the general improvement of dogs.*’ This objective to be achieved through:-

- **Ensuring that the Kennel Club is the first port of call on all canine matters.**
- **Improving canine health and welfare.**
- **Popularising canine events focusing on the retention of existing participants and the attracting of new.**
- **Encouraging the development of all those concerned with dogs through education and training.**
- **Achieving a widening of the Kennel Club membership base.**
- **Encouraging more people to provide input in the Kennel Club’s decision making process.”**