

## **Briefing Note to Activities Liaison Councils**

### **Activities Health & Welfare Sub-Group**

The aim of this note is to provide the Liaison Councils with an introduction to the Dog Health Group Activities Working Party and how it will operate.

The agreed aims of the Working Party are to:

- Contribute towards guidance, advice and opinion to the Kennel Club's Activities Sub-Committee, based on clinical veterinary experience and the latest available scientific research.
- Proactively review the available scientific research and bring any relevant information or findings to the attention of the Sub-Committee for discussion and action where appropriate.
- Recommend areas for further research and investigation in order to address issues raised by the Working Party or the Activities Sub-Committee, and; to define and scope the parameters for any research recommended.

The setting up of the Working Party has been approved by the General Committee and will report to the Dog Health Group, although for the most part any research work will be referred to the Working Party via the Activities Sub-Committee (ASC). The scope of any research and subsequent recommendations is limited to Agility, Flyball, Heelwork to Music, Obedience and Working Trials.

A core group of experts have been invited to form the basis of the working party, which include; veterinary surgeons, lecturers & research scientists with a background in human sports science, lecturers & research scientists with a background in animal sciences (all of whom are actively involved in canine performance sports) together with representatives of the Activities Sub-Committee who will provide insights and input on their respective disciplines.

The aim is to keep working Party membership relatively small to facilitate good communication, effectiveness and efficiency. However, the Working Party expects to call upon other experts in their field to address specific issues as and when necessary.

The Working Party has met twice, firstly to discuss the practicalities involved in setting up such a group, to highlight the issues that could be addressed and to propose the aims, objectives and terms of reference.

The General Committee has agreed to the formation of a Working Party subject to certain caveats and have asked that one of the first tasks should be to develop and conduct a health survey for Activities (namely: Agility, Flyball,

Heelwork to Music, Obedience and Working Trials). The aim of the health survey is to establish a benchmark for the general health of dogs taking part in canine performance sports. The results of which will be used to guide research priorities for the future.

At its most recent meeting the working party discussed a list of issues in detail, all of which have been raised by Working Party members (which included a representative from each discipline). A formula for prioritising the issues has been agreed by the Working Party and the issues raised at the first meeting have now been prioritised; those considered to have the highest priority will be taken to the next stage.

Agreement to take issues forward will be sought from the Dog Health Group following consultation with the Activities Sub-Committee. Once it has been decided to investigate an issue the next step is to establish what research studies have already been done (if any) and to review the findings. A recommendation will then be made as to any further research considered necessary to further our knowledge in these areas. Where further research is required funding will be sought outside of the Kennel Club (e.g. from the Kennel Club Charitable Trust).

The aim of any studies undertaken is to provide the Activities Sub-Committee and the Liaison Councils with evidence based information upon which they may wish to discuss changes to rules and regulations, equipment or issue general guidance to competitors.

The Working Party will mainly work on issues referred to by the Activities Sub-Committee, the Dog Health Group and the General Committee. The first step in raising an issue to be investigated is to bring it to the attention of relevant Liaison Council and / or the Activities Sub Committee who will assess the need for it to be referred to the Working Party for further consideration. To fulfill its brief Working Party members may also raise issues for consideration and further research.

**Steve Croxford**

Chairman

Dog Health Group Activities Working Party

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