



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OBEDIENCE LIAISON
COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 10.30AM IN
THE BOARDROOM, THE KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET**

PRESENT

Mrs K Allen	South West
Mrs A Benoist	North East
Miss F Godfrey	South East/East Anglia
Mr R Harlow	South East/East Anglia
Mrs D Lavender	North East
Mrs J Le Fevre	South East/East Anglia
Mr B Luckock	Midlands
Mr J McIntosh	Scotland
Mr D Moxon	South/South West
Mrs C Patrick	Scotland
Mrs K Russell	North West
Mrs B Smith	Midlands
Mr N Slater	Midlands
Mr R Wakelin	North West

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Senior Manager - Governance & Education
Miss A Groves	Administrator – Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Mitchell	Senior Committee Secretary - Working Dog Activities Team
Mr K Stanbridge	Senior Social Media Officer (film viewing only)

IN THE CHAIR

MR R HARLOW

NOTE: any recommendations made by the Obedience Liaison Council are subject to review by the Activities Committee and the Kennel Club Board, and will not come into effect unless and until Board approval has been confirmed.

1. Mr Stanbridge joined the meeting for the purpose of showing a short film, produced by the Kennel Club's Marketing Department, on the topic of 'Getting Involved in Obedience', prior to the film's planned launch.
2. The Council noted that the film was aimed at newcomers to obedience, and featured a range of different breeds and different skill levels. It was of the view that the concept was an excellent one, but provided some feedback regarding specific issues. This would be taken into account prior to the film being released.
3. Mr Stanbridge was thanked for his attendance, and left the meeting.



ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4. Apologies were received from Mr J Farr and Mr M McCartney.
5. The Council noted that Mrs Jessop had resigned from her role as Council representative for Wales. A replacement would be elected for the remainder of the Council's term of office in due course.

ITEM 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

6. Following the resignation of Mr McCartney from the role of Vice Chairman, the Council was requested to elect a Vice-Chairman for the remaining term of office i.e. until 31 December 2021.
7. The Chairman highlighted the fact that it was a busy time for the Council, and the role required significant commitment.
8. Two nominations were received. Mrs Lavender was proposed by Mrs Smith and seconded by Mrs Benoist. Mrs Patrick was proposed by Mrs Russell and seconded by Mr McIntosh.
9. A vote took place and Mrs Lavender was elected to the role

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

10. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

11. The Council noted that the Board, at its meeting on 8 October 2019, approved the following amendments to G Regulations:

Regulation G(C)4.e.(3)

TO:

Class B. In this class at normal and slow pace the only permissible turns are turns of 90° to the left or right, 180° about turns to the right or the left and diagonal turns to the right and left. Medium or large circles and arcs can be included. At fast-pace the only permissible turns are turns of 90° to the left or right, **diagonal turns to the right** and 180° about turns to the right. Medium or large circles and arcs can be included.

(Insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Regulation G(C)4.e.(4)(i)

TO:

Class C (i) Permitted turns

At normal and slow pace the permissible turns are 90° to the left or right, 180° about turns to the left or right, diagonal turns to the left or right, and circles or arcs. At fast pace, the only permissible turns are 90° to the left or right, **diagonal turns to the right and** 180° about turns to the right, and circles or arcs.

(Insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Training for commentators

12. At its previous meeting, the Council was advised that subsequent to its request, the Board had approved the principle of practical training for commentators but with the stipulation that such training should be available company-wide, as appropriate. It was informed that the



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scheduling of a Commentators Seminar (to encompass all disciplines) was currently on hold due to resourcing.

13. The Council noted that no progress had been made as yet, but it was anticipated that work on the business case, to be submitted on the Council's behalf, would commence shortly. A further update would be provided in due course.

Accredited Trainers Annual Seminar

14. At its July meeting, the Council had agreed that it would be a positive step to invite Dr J Boyd, chair of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group, to attend the Accredited Trainers Annual Seminar in October 2019 to raise awareness of the work of the Sub-Group. However Dr Boyd had been unable to attend.

15. The Council was in full agreement with a suggestion from the office that Dr Boyd should be invited to attend the next seminar which would take place in autumn 2020.

Distance between dogs during stays

16. Noting that the issue of stays would be discussed later in the meeting, the Council agreed to defer consideration of a proposal submitted by Mrs Le Fevre until later (paragraphs 110-116 refer).

ITEM 5. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

17. The Council noted a written report from Mr Rutter on the work of the Activities Judges Sub-Group following its meeting on 14 November 2019. The main issues relating to Obedience were as follows:

18. **Education days for activities judges:** The Sub-Group had agreed to continue to progress this matter. Following further discussion, it agreed that it would be a positive step to educate judges regarding the conformation and movement of dogs, and also what to look for in respect of unfit or unwell dogs and what actions could be taken where a judge had concerns about such dogs.

19. **Obedience Rules, Regulations and Procedure seminar:** the Sub-Group was in support of the seminar and examination being online, and of the development of the Obedience Test Design and Practice of Judging Practical seminar to make it more extensive in nature. It was anticipated that it would include an assessment, as discussed by the Accredited Trainers for obedience.

20. In line with the views of the Sub-Group, the Accredited Trainers for obedience had submitted a proposal for the Council's consideration, as follows:

Proposed amendments to Regulation G.31.c. Approval of Judges

21. The proposal was submitted by the Accredited Trainers following their annual seminar on 22 October 2019.

22. It was made with the objective of using technology as a resource in the education of judges, which would make it more attractive to those thinking about taking up judging, by allowing them to take the Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure examination online.

23. A concern was raised that attending a classroom-based seminar allowed attendees the opportunity to raise questions and to participate in valuable discussions via interaction with Accredited Trainers and other delegates, but that this was not the case where the examination was taken online.

24. It was noted however that the Activities Judges Sub-Group was in the process of considering an expansion of the Kennel Club Obedience Test Design and Practice of



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Judging seminar, which would address such concerns. The revised format for the seminar would focus mainly on the practical issues relating to judging, and would allow candidates the opportunity for detailed discussion. The seminar would also include an assessment which candidates would be required to pass.

25. The Council acknowledged the necessity to move with the times and to make use of available technology, noting that most people were familiar with using online facilities. It also accepted that providing the opportunity to take the examination at home may encourage more people to take it and to become qualified to judge, which would be a positive step.
26. A vote took place, and, by a majority, the proposal was supported. Accordingly, the following amendments to Regulation G31.c were **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G.31.c. Approval of Judges

TO:

c. At the time of judging a first Championship appointment the judge must have ~~attended a Kennel Club Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination.~~ **completed and passed an Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure examination on the Kennel Club Academy prior to attending a Kennel Club Obedience Test Design and Practice of Judging seminar, and have attended a Kennel Club Obedience Test Design and Practice of Judging seminar, and passed the assessment.**

d. Qualifications for judges at premier and open shows and for the non-certificate classes at Championship Shows

On first appointment judges must satisfy the show committee that they:

(1) have judged a minimum of four appointments within at least two years at a lower level including limited/companion obedience shows and matches/club or fun competitions.

(2) have won out of Beginners at a licensed championship, premier or open obedience show as a handler, and have acted as a caller, scribe or marker steward on six occasions at licensed shows; and

(3) have ~~attended a Kennel Club Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination.~~ **completed and passed an Obedience Regulations and Judging Procedure examination on the Kennel Club Academy prior to attending a Kennel Club Obedience Test Design and Practice of Judging seminar.**

(4) have attended an ~~Obedience Test Design and the Practice of Judging Seminar.~~ **a Kennel Club Obedience Test Design and Practice of Judging seminar and passed the assessment.**

(Deletions struck through, insertions in bold)

ITEM 6. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

27. The Council noted a written report from Mrs Patrick following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 19 September 2019, together with a verbal update following its meeting on 13 January 2020.
28. **Colour recognition in dogs:** The Sub-Group had considered issues relating to colour recognition in dogs and had agreed that it was an interesting topic and that it would remain on its agenda. The topic was one which was relevant to several disciplines, but in obedience, it was related to the colour of retrieve items and sendaway markers, and the way in which this affected a dog's ability to carry out the exercises. A further report would be provided to the Council in due course.
29. In considering the matter of colour recognition in dogs, the Sub-Group had been keen to promote eye testing for dogs via the BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme. It was of the view that this would be a positive step to promote awareness and use of the Eye Scheme and that doing so may be beneficial in identifying dogs suffering from undiagnosed eye conditions, which



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could then be managed appropriately by owners.

30. Any dog, including crossbreeds and unregistered dogs, may be tested under the provisions of the Eye Scheme, details of which may be found at:
<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health/for-breeders/complex-inheriteddisorders/bvakc-health-schemes/bvakcids-eye-scheme/>
31. In response to a query, it was clarified that eye testing sessions may be held at any show, including open shows. Clubs wishing to organise such sessions should make contact with a panellist appointed by the British Veterinary Association. Details of panellists may be found at: <https://www.bva.co.uk/canine-health-schemes/eye-scheme/find-an-eyepanellist/>
32. **Dogs registered on the Activity Register:** the Sub-Group had recorded its full support for the development of a facility to allow public access to information regarding dogs on the Activity Register, particularly health testing information and details of parentage.
33. **Health symposium:** plans were in progress for a health symposium to take place in September 2020. More details would be released in due course.

ITEM 7. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB

34. The report from Mrs Lavender was noted.
35. The Council was pleased to note that Mrs Lavender would now be receiving monthly emails from the YKC department in order to provide updates on any matters relating to obedience.
36. The YKC Summer Camp was due to take place in August 2020 at Rutland Showground. Obedience training would be provided at the camp, including a one day masterclass. In addition it was hoped that one day training days for YKC members would be offered throughout 2020, in different areas. Mrs Mary Ray had agreed to provide training at one of the days.
37. Anyone wishing to assist with any of the above activities was requested to contact Mrs Lavender.
38. A query was raised as to whether there had been any progress in encouraging YKC competitors to participate in mainstream obedience competitions. It was acknowledged that this would take time to achieve, but it was hoped that better communications between the Council (via Mrs Lavender) and the YKC would be instrumental in encouraging progress.
39. Noting the difficulty experienced by some clubs in appointing suitable committee members, it was suggested that those at the higher age limit for YKC membership (24 years of age) may be encouraged to offer their services as committee members. This would provide a good link from YKC into competitive obedience, which may be helpful in encouraging younger people to compete, whilst providing valuable experience to the individual concerned.

ITEM 8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OBEDIENCE WORKING PARTY

40. The Council considered the recommendations made by the Obedience Working Party, which was appointed at the Council's July meeting, with the objective of discussing ways in which obedience may be promoted.
41. With the objective of encouraging new competitors, with a wide range of breeds and crossbreeds, into obedience, and to retain existing competitors as they progressed through the classes, the Working Party had proposed the introduction of height-classified classes, in which awards would be offered based on the height classification of competing dogs. Such classes, which would be optional, would be judged in the usual way by one judge and the same test would apply to all competitors, however, four separate sets of awards would be offered split by small, medium, standard, and giant dogs.



42. Under the terms of the proposal:

- Height-classified classes (with wins counting towards progression) may be scheduled up to and including Open Class 'C'. The qualification for Championship Class 'C' would remain unchanged.
- Scheduling such classes would be optional, and clubs not wishing to do so would be free to continue to schedule classes with a single set of awards, as currently.
- Alternatively, clubs may choose to schedule some height-classified classes, for example Introductory, Pre-Beginner and Beginner, whilst scheduling other classes with a single set of awards.
- The height categories would be as follows:
 - Small: For dogs measuring 35 cm or under at the withers.
 - Medium: For dogs measuring over 35 cm and 43 cm or under at the withers.
 - Standard: For dogs which have not been measured, or measuring over 43 cm and 60 cm or under at the withers.
 - Giant: For dogs measuring over 60 cm at the withers.

43. It was noted that there had been a considerable amount of feedback on social media regarding the proposal, much of it negative, however it was acknowledged that only a relatively small proportion of the obedience community as a whole had commented. Some representatives had also held meetings to discuss the proposals and although in some cases attendance had been good, the majority of obedience competitors had not participated.

44. It appeared that there was some misunderstanding regarding the proposed height-related classes in that many had not understood that such classes would be optional, and show organisers would not be obliged to schedule them. Further, where these classes were scheduled, competitors who wished to compete against dogs of a range of heights would be permitted to compete at the 'standard' height, regardless of the height of their dog.

It was also noted that the initiative was targeted not towards existing competitors, but towards handlers who did not currently compete but may be encouraged to do so. Face to face contact with some existing and potential competitors had indicated a considerable degree of support for height-classified classes, especially among those with small dogs.

45. It was reiterated that there was a wide range of activities available to dog owners, and that obedience as a discipline must be pro-active in attracting and welcoming them. The Council was optimistic that there was a very large target market for competitive obedience, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of those taking part in Obedience competitions and Good Citizen Dog Scheme training.

46. The Council was reminded that should a vote take place in which the proposal was rejected, it would be ineligible for discussion again within a two year period. Accordingly, the Council agreed that it should be withdrawn for consideration as a proposal at this time. It would be referred back to the Obedience Working Party for further detailed discussion with a view to further consideration by the Council at its July meeting.

47. In particular the following issues were identified as requiring attention by the Working Party:

- Regulation amendments which would be necessary to facilitate the introduction of height-classified classes, to include:
 - Clarification that the scheduling of height-classified classes would be optional for show organisers
 - Clarification of whether clubs may schedule some height-classified classes alongside existing standard classes
 - Clarification that competitors may compete at Standard height should they not wish to have their dog measured in order to compete in small, medium or giant
 - Potential to split classes by size, should entry numbers be sufficiently high
- Details of the measuring process



- To review the proposed heights for each category and to confirm whether they were correct
 - Progression issues – to ensure that dogs did not progress too quickly via height classified classes, and to ensure that class wins may be withheld should the standard not be sufficiently high
 - Possibility of an ABC option
48. Following further consideration by the Working Party, the matter would be placed on the agenda for the Council's July meeting.
49. The Council acknowledged that there had been a decline in the number of Kennel Club registered clubs offering training, and that such clubs often experienced difficulty in finding committee members and helpers. However many clubs remained pro-active in encouraging new handlers.
50. It was highlighted that some shows, such as Paignton & District Fanciers Association's championship show, were offering a wide range of activities, including breed showing, agility, and obedience, and were being very successful in doing so. It was hoped that more shows may follow suit and that obedience would benefit as a result.

ITEM 9. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Proposed amendment to Regulation G29(f)3.

51. The proposal was submitted by Phoenix Obedience Dog Club, represented by Mr Wakelin.
52. The proposal was seconded by Miss Godfrey.
53. The Club noted that some societies were finding it difficult to complete the draw, especially at smaller open shows where classes may be just over the 25 per class/200 competitor threshold at which organisers may currently reduce the number of competitors/dogs in a running order to six. Under the terms of the proposal, societies would be permitted to draw six competitors/dogs regardless of the number of entries, however, societies with larger entries would still be able to draw 10 or more competitors/dogs should they wish to do so.
54. The Council acknowledged the difficulties of conducting draws, noting that most clubs would do their best to accommodate the wishes of competitors, although this was not always possible. In some cases, competitors would only enter one class in order to minimise the likelihood of being drawn, as a result of which entries were being adversely affected. However, there was a concern that reducing the number of competitors in a running order may result in judges being kept waiting, as there may in some cases be a high absentee rate.
55. It was highlighted that where a society preferred to draw 10 competitors, they would still have the option to do so, but the Council was of the view that in many cases the reduction to six would be helpful, and would reduce the administrative burden on show organisers.
56. A vote took place, and the Council was unanimous in supporting the proposal. Accordingly, the following amendment to G Regulations was **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G29.f(3)

TO:

Where a draw for the complete running order of classes other than Championship Class C is not made, show managements must conduct a ballot to determine a running order for at least the first 10 6 competitors/dogs in these classes: this may be reduced to 6 at shows with less than 200 dogs entered or where there are less than 25 dogs entered in a specific class. Sub paragraph (3) does not apply to limited shows. (Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold.)



Proposed amendments to Regulation G(A)13 Capped Classes

57. The proposal was submitted by Mr Luckock, who wished to propose an amendment to the above Regulation, with the primary aim of alleviating the splitting of classes at Championship Obedience shows.
58. The proposal was seconded by Mr Moxon.
59. Mr Luckock highlighted that under the existing Regulation, Championship Class 'C' was effectively capped at 60 dogs, and that there was no advantage to excluding the capping of other classes at championship shows.
60. It was anticipated that allowing the capping of classes at championship classes would assist show societies in potentially reducing the number of judges that may be required for those classes which held the same status as at open obedience shows. This would have a positive effect on the administrative burden, and on the financial outcome of the show.
61. It was noted that the capping level at open shows must be set at a minimum of 35 entries received. Under the terms of the proposal, the same minimum would apply for classes at championship shows, other than Championship Class 'C', although a suggestion was made that the proposal be amended to state a minimum of 60 entries.
62. There was some concern that should classes at championship shows be set at this level, such classes may be perceived as being dominated by Championship Class 'C' handlers, and other competitors may be disincentivised to enter. As a result, overall entries may be reduced. Further, setting a cap would reduce the number of entries which in turn would adversely affect income, which would defeat the object of the proposal.
63. However it was also accepted that the proposal would be helpful to show organisers, particularly those in remote areas where entries may not be high, in allowing them to make accurate financial plans. It would also allow them flexibility in making arrangements to suit their own individual circumstances.
64. Noting the mixed views on this issue, a vote took place, and by a majority, the proposal was not recommended for approval.

Proposed amendment to Regulation G(A)8.b. 66.

65. Mr McIntosh presented the proposal on behalf of Ms R Aitken, who wished to amend the points for Novice to be amended as follows:
 - (1) Heel on lead ~~20~~ **25** points
 - (2) Heel free ~~25~~ **20** points
66. It was noted that despite requests from the office, no rationale for the proposal had been received.
67. No seconder was available and the proposal was not discussed further

ITEM 10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Out of sight stays

68. Consideration of a discussion item submitted by Ms M Knapp was deferred until later in the meeting when the issue of out of stays would be considered further (paragraphs 99-108, and 117-119 refer).



Styles of finish

69. Mrs Patrick presented the discussion item on behalf of Mrs A Henry, an individual, who wished the Council to discuss the issue of finishes, noting that some judges were marking the dog moving into the finish position by going through the competitor's legs whereas others were not doing so. In the interests of clarity and consistency, Mrs Henry wished to suggest that G Regulations for all relevant exercises be amended to specify that the finish should be either a Continental finish or an English finish and not through the legs, which was a current practice among some competitors.
70. The Council was of the view that using either the Continental finish or the English finish was custom and practice, however G Regulations did not stipulate details of how the finish should be carried out. It was highlighted that exercises should be the same for all competitors, and that permitting the use of a finish through the handler's legs would not achieve this objective as it would not be a possibility for some handlers with large dogs.
71. The Council did not consider that an amendment to G Regulations was necessary, but it wished to clarify that performing a finish where the dog moved through the handler's legs was not acceptable. The finish should be achieved either by the dog moving around behind the handler, or by moving around the handler's left side.

Limit to number of wins in Open Class 'C'

72. Mr McIntosh wished the Council to consider a suggestion that after four wins in Open Class 'C', a dog or bitch may only enter Championship Class 'C' Dog/Bitch classes. This would put Open Class 'C' in line with all other classes from Introductory to Open C, and would also allow more people to be able to qualify for Championship classes.
73. Mr McIntosh also wished to suggest that, with numbers being increased in Championship classes, a system of points may be used for the first 10 places, with 1st place receiving 10 points down to 1 point for 10th place.
74. Mr McIntosh wished to draw the attention of the Council to a perception among some competitors that they could not compete with top handlers in Open Class 'C', and as a result were discouraged from entering. This had a detrimental effect on entries.
75. This was noted by the Council, however it was pointed out that limiting the number of wins in Open 'C' would also result in lower entries and consequently decreased revenue for show organisers. Some competitors entered Open Class 'C' but chose to use the round for training only; under the terms of the suggested measure, they would no longer be able to do so.
76. There was some support for the principle of the suggestion, particularly its objective to allow more dogs to qualify for Championship Class 'C', but it was suggested that if supported, the number of permitted wins should be set at a higher level.
77. However, overall the Council was of the view that limiting the number of wins in Open Class 'C' would effectively preclude some dogs from competing at open shows at all, and would also penalise those qualified for Championship Class 'C' who did not wish to enter that class, such as those with older dogs. Further, it would be detrimental to those who were not able to get to championship shows.
78. The discussion item was not supported.

Capping on number of wins

79. Mr McIntosh, on behalf of Ms R Aitken, wished to suggest that a cap be placed on the number of wins in each class, except Open Class 'C' and Championship Class 'C'. This would allow more competitors to progress through the classes, while handlers having reached the cap could



compete in the class until such time as the relevant closing dates have passed, but may not accept a win. Ms Aitken was of the view that this would be self-regulating as handlers were usually aware of how many wins others had achieved, or the booking-in form could be marked in some way.

80. It was accepted that such a measure may be welcomed by some competitors, particularly those who found it difficult to gain class wins in order to progress, but there was considerable concern regarding the impact on show secretaries.
81. A suggestion was made that a '21 day rule' be introduced whereby all wins up to and including 21 days before the start of the competition would be counted when entering for any class. Should a dog become eligible for the next class at a particular show, after the entry for that show had been sent, it would be the competitor's responsibility to notify the show secretary so that the dogs may be moved into the appropriate class.
82. It was acknowledged that a similar system worked well in agility, but the Council was keen to ensure that it would not prove unduly onerous for secretaries.
83. The attention of the Council was drawn to the existence of a social media group for UK obedience show secretaries. The group had a significant membership of over 120 secretaries and it was understood that it had discussed a similar issue a short time ago.
84. It was agreed that the views of the social media group should be sought in order to inform further consideration of the suggestion. Mr Harlow undertook to contact the group administrator to seek further information.

Progression on points

85. Winchester City Dog Training Club and Mr Moxon requested the Council to discuss the possibility for an option for progression on points, with the objective of allowing competitors an alternative route to progression. Mr Moxon pointed out that a similar system existed in agility, where progression on wins was mandatory, but competitors may elect to progress on points. The recommendation was to utilise the existing Obedience Excellent points scheme, rather than to introduce a new scale of points solely for progression purposes.
86. However, handlers wishing to attain an Obedience Warrant would need to exercise caution on progression from Novice without the relevant wins, as this would prevent them from gaining an Obedience Warrant. It was intended that should the suggestion for progression on points proceed, the recommendation would be that for the Obedience Warrant, only one win from Novice would be required.
87. Feedback indicated some support for the idea, although it was suggested that points should be awarded for 1st – 6th places rather than 1st – 4th.
88. There was a slight concern at whether standards would be lowered should a progression on points system be introduced, but on balance it was not considered that there would be any significant detrimental effect, if any.
89. Should the system be introduced, competitors would be permitted to take into account pre-existing wins or places to count towards progression. However, it was emphasised that progression on points would be optional. Progression into Championship Class 'C' would still require wins, as at present.
90. The Council was in support of the discussion item, noting that it would support progression through the classes and would therefore be of benefit to competitors. Accordingly it was agreed that the matter would be referred to the Working Party for further discussion and formulation of a proposal to be submitted to the Council for consideration at its meeting in July 2020.



Maximum number of dogs

91. The discussion item was presented by Mrs Allen, representing Ms H Holley, who wished the Council to discuss the maximum number of dogs which may be judged in one day.
92. G Regulations stated that the maximum number of dogs a person may judge on one day is 60, however Ms Holley was of the view that this number was too high and that in Classes B and C should be reduced to 50.
93. There was no support for the suggestion and it was not discussed further.

Obedience Excellent award

94. The Council noted that, at present 10 points were required to claim an Obedience Excellent award in Pre-Beginners.
95. However, with effect from 1 January 2020, Regulation G(A)6.a. stated that to compete in Pre-Beginners a handler or dog must not have won two (previously one) first places in either Pre-Beginners or Beginners nor gained a third place or above in any other Obedience class (Introductory Class excepted). Currently, 10 points were awarded for a first place.
96. Noting this, the Council was of the view that it was necessary to make an amendment to the number of points required to claim the Obedience Excellent award in Pre-Beginners.
97. Mrs Allen agreed to prepare a proposal which would be submitted to the Council at its July meeting.

Out of sight stays

98. At this point in the meeting the Council considered the matter of out of sight stays, at the request of the Activities Committee. It also discussed a proposal from Mrs Le Fevre relating to the distance between dogs during stays, and a discussion item submitted by Ms M Knapp regarding stays. Discussion of these items had been deferred earlier in the meeting.
99. At its meeting on 5 December 2019, the Committee had discussed the out of sight stay exercise in both working trials and obedience, noting information received from the Australian National Kennel Council Limited which was in the process of reviewing out of sight stays, and the American Kennel Club, which had replaced the exercise with other exercises designed to test the dog's ability to stay.
100. The removal of out of sight stays from the Good Citizen Dog Scheme Gold test, with effect from 2020, was also highlighted.
101. The Committee had requested the views of the Council, with particular reference to the following questions:
 - Whether any stay exercise should be carried out with the dog on or off lead
 - Whether it was appropriate for out of sight stays to continue to be scheduled
102. The Council acknowledged that the out of sight stay exercise carried an inherent risk of the owner being deemed to not be in control of his or her dog. It considered that this presented a significant safety issue, together with a potential risk of litigation should a serious incident occur. It is understood that there may be potential legal implications based on the 1871 Dogs Act. Legal opinion had confirmed that legally it had been stated that if a dog is not in sight of the owner/handler and in the absence of positive evidence to the contrary it is not under control. It was noted that a dog that is not under control has not committed an offence unless there was a problem; interpretations may vary based on a variety of scenarios.



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103. Noting the above, the Council also considered that should an incident occur, there was a possibility that insurance may be invalid under such circumstances.
104. Having considered the matter carefully, and in view of serious concerns regarding safety and welfare and the legal implications, the Council wished to recommend that out of sight stays be discontinued as soon as possible, and removed from the list of exercises.
105. With regard to other stay exercises where the dog remained in sight of the handler, it recommended that with immediate effect all handlers should be required to stand sideways on to their dogs, not with their backs to them, so that they would be in view of the handler at all times.
106. In view of the seriousness of the issue, the Council was unanimous in recommending that the matter be considered by the Activities Committee and/or the Board as a matter of priority. Any necessary amendments to G Regulations, and adjustments to points, may be addressed subsequently.
107. It was acknowledged that there were also issues in respect of stay exercises, which were not popular with some competitors, particularly those competing in the lower classes. It appeared that some handlers were discouraged from competing because of the requirement for stays. It was agreed that the stay exercise should be reviewed at the Council's next meeting, and that suitable proposals would be formulated by Mrs Allen, Mr Luckock, Mrs Patrick and Mr Wakelin.
108. The Council went on to consider the position in respect of exercises where a dog would be off-lead and at a distance from the handler, such as the retrieve and the sendaway. However it was not of the view that the same concerns applied as the dog would be in sight of the handler at all times.

Proposal for amendment to Regulation G(C)4.h.

109. Discussion of this item had been deferred earlier in the meeting (paragraph 16 refers).
110. At its previous meeting, the Council had discussed suggested amendments to the G Regulations, which would stipulate a minimum distance of 1.5 metres between dogs in the stay ring, with a recommended gap of 2 metres where possible.
111. It had not supported the amendments, but had suggested that Regulation G(C)4(h) be amended to provide for stays to be split at outdoor shows as well as indoor ones, as this would provide all show organisers with the opportunity to ensure that competitors had adequate space in the stay ring.
112. Accordingly, it considered a proposal submitted by Mrs Le Fevre. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Smith.
113. It was clarified that it would be for the show manager to decide which competitors would go into which part of a split class for the stay exercise. In most cases, show organisers would know in advance whether a split would be necessary, and could plan accordingly. It was acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances this may not be the case, for example where weather conditions made part of an outside ring unsuitable for use.
114. Noting that split stays would require additional resources such as more helpers, it was confirmed that splitting the class would be optional, and therefore provided flexibility to show organisers to manage the stay exercise as they saw fit.



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115. The Council concluded that the proposal achieved the objective of allowing the opportunity for more distance between each dog in a stay ring. Accordingly, it was unanimous in recommending the proposed amendment for approval, as follows:

Regulation G(C)4.h. – Stays in ALL classes

TO:

The judge or steward will direct handlers to positions in the ring. The command 'last command' will be given and handlers should then instantly give their final command to their dogs. Any further commands or signals to the dogs after this 'last command' will be penalised. Handlers will then be instructed to leave their dogs and walk to positions indicated until ordered to return to them. These are group tests and all dogs must compete together, but where this is impracticable at an ~~indoor~~ any show, the class may be equally divided but the judging for the groups must be consecutive. **The stay ring shall be large enough to cater for the largest expected attendance for each class.**

(Deletions struck through. Insertion in bold)

Discussion item submitted by Ms M Knapp – out of sight stays

116. Discussion of this item had been deferred earlier in the meeting (paragraph 69 refers).
117. The Council noted the discussion item from Ms Knapp, who wished it to consider the matter of out of sight stays, and had made suggestions regarding stay exercises in classes up to and including Open Class 'C'.
118. Consideration of this item had been superseded by the earlier discussion regarding out of sight stays, and therefore it was not discussed further. Ms Knapp was thanked for her submission and her views were noted.

ITEM 11. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

119. The Council noted the Five Year Strategic Plan but did not consider it necessary to add further items at this stage.

ITEM 12. OBEDIENCE INFORMATION STAND

120. . The Council noted that arrangements for the Obedience Information Stand at Crufts were in hand. A report would be provided to the Council at its July meeting.

ITEM 13. CHIEF STEWARDS AT OBEDIENCE SHOWS

121. At its meeting on 11 September 2019, the Activities Committee highlighted the necessity for individuals appointed as Chief Stewards at obedience shows to be suitably experienced and qualified for the role, in compliance with the provisions of Regulation G(E)1.a.
122. The Council was requested to consider a suggestion from the Committee that a list be drawn up of individuals who were able to fulfil the role of Chief Steward.



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123. It was acknowledged that in some cases Chief Stewards were appointed despite not fulfilling the minimum requirements for the role. The Council wished to remind all show organisers of the provisions of Regulation G(E)1.a. which stated 'A chief steward should have at least eight years of competitive obedience experience, a sound knowledge of the Kennel Club Rules and G Regulations, and a familiarity with the Kennel Club complaints procedure.'
124. However, it did not consider that a list of qualified individuals would be helpful as such people may find themselves subject to an excessive number of requests for their services.

ITEM 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

125. The Council's attention was drawn to the efforts of a listed status club which was running a series of four Listed Status Obedience shows, each of half a day's duration, on 18/19 April 2020. It was anticipated that the innovative format would be beneficial to judges, competitors and helpers and would help to reduce the club's costs.

ITEM 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

126. The next meeting of the Council would be held on 23 July 2020. Any items for the agenda must be submitted by 24 April 2020.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm.

MR R HARLOW
Chairman

The Kennel Club's mission statement

'The Kennel Club is the national body which exists to promote the general improvement, health and well-being of all dogs through responsible breeding and ownership'