

**MEETING OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON
17 JULY 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 22 January 2014 (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

- a. The Council is invited to note that at its meeting on 15 April 2014, the General Committee approved the following changes to the regulations, with effect from 1 January 2015:
 - i. Amendment to Regulation H18.a. (Approval of Judges) – to allow individuals to apply for approval to award Championship Agility Certificates, without having been nominated by a Championship society first.
 - ii. Amendment to Regulation H(1)(B)3 (Obstacles) – definition of approved obstacles.
 - iii. Amendment to Regulation H(1)2 – definition of Agility.
- b. Agility Equipment Specifications
The Council is invited to note that the Activities Sub-Committee approved the specimen letter which may be used by show societies for their contracts with equipment suppliers to ensure that agility equipment would meet the correct specifications in line with the Kennel Club 'H' Regulations. The document is now available to download from the Kennel Club website.
(Annex A refers)
- c. Recognition of Agility as a Sport
The Activities Sub-Committee supported the request by the Agility Liaison Council that the Sports Council be approached once again to request the eligibility criteria for official recognition of agility as a sport so that the option could be considered in the future. It was acknowledged that progression of such an application would involve a great deal of work, but the Sub-Committee was of the view it would be worthwhile. The Council is invited to note that a

report would be produced once feedback had been received from the Sports Council.

d. Registered Clubs - Formation of Working Party

The Sub-Committee considered the Agility Liaison Council's request to form a Working Party whose remit would be to try to improve protection for registered clubs and develop incentives for competitors to support these clubs. It was noted that registered clubs, who were the lifeblood of the sport, often found themselves competing for members against private clubs which were run on a commercial basis and could offer a very high standard of training. The Sub-Committee wished to support registered clubs but was of the view that clubs must address this problem themselves. It was not in principle against the formation of a Working Party but considered that the Council should be requested to submit a more detailed plan, including information as to how a Working Party should be funded. Alternatively, the Council may be able to do a great deal of work itself without necessarily forming a separate Working Party, and the Sub-Committee would be willing to consider any detailed proposals or suggestions it may wish to submit.

e. Development of Kennel Club Agility – Formation of Working Party

The Sub-Committee considered the formation of a Working Party whose remit would be to develop a business case for a results database. The business case would then be given further consideration. The Sub-Committee considered that the same comments applied as to the request for a Working Party to discuss the role of registered clubs and referred the matter back to the Liaison Council for further consideration.

f. Standard Class Equipment – Mr M Bacon

At its last meeting in January 2014, the Council discussed the issue of the Weaving Poles and some contact equipment sometimes being omitted in standard classes, and to consider the possibility of enforcing their use. It was agreed that certain equipment should be included in standard classes to ensure dogs were required to negotiate more challenging obstacles, from a safety point of view as well, before being able to progress through the grades. Mr Bacon prepared a proposal, as requested by the Council, for further consideration as follows:

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)4.

TO:

Standard classes may be scheduled for Agility Shows, as Agility classes or Jumping classes. ~~Agility classes to include contact obstacles and Jumping classes when there are no contact obstacles.~~ All standard classes must contain the Weaving Poles obstacle. Standard Agility classes must contain the following elements: "A Ramp", Dog Walk and See-Saw. In the event of mitigating circumstances (i.e. 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. With this proviso classes are defined as follows:
(Amendments underlined)

Rationale

There have been a number of open agility shows that have not had weaving poles, seesaws or dog walks in the agility courses or weaving poles in the jumping classes. This means that dogs can progress through the grades without being able to weave correctly, or able to negotiate the seesaw or dog walk safely. As the classes involved have been graded from 1 through to 7 it is possible that a dog could progress through to the higher grades and potentially championship without weaving, or completing a seesaw or dog walk.

If it is known in advance that there is an issue with staking equipment in the venue or the ring not being large enough to accommodate a full set of agility equipment, classes that will not comply should be designated as special classes and it should be made clear in the schedule that they are special classes and what equipment will be used in them.

If there are mitigating circumstances (for example in the event of extreme adverse weather conditions) at an agility competition the Judge, with the 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.

- g. Minimum Ring Sizes for Indoor Shows – Mrs J Gardner & Mr J Gilbert
Further to its meeting in January 2014, Mrs Gardner and Mr Gilbert request the Council discuss the matter of ring sizes for indoor venues. It is emphasised that the agility community should determine whether there is a need to stipulate a minimum ring size for indoor venues prior to a formal regulation proposal being considered.

ITEM 5. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

- a. The Council is invited to note a verbal report from Mr S Croxford on the progress of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group following a meeting on 21 March 2014.
- b. The Council is invited to receive a presentation from Mr G Doyle on the initial findings of research carried out by the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group with regard to minimum distances between jumps and to consider whether it is necessary for any amendment to be made to regulation H(1)(B)(3) Design.
- c. The Council is requested to consider whether a sand and paint surface is still acceptable or whether all contact equipment should have rubberised surfaces. The Sub-Group had noted that a sand and paint surface was still used by some clubs on contact equipment but this was becoming less common, and that many dogs were now used to rubberised surfaces.
- d. The Sub-Group had noted that at present the regulations do not specify a fixed width for the dog walk or the see-saw and that this may be between 10 inches and 12 inches. The Council is requested to consider whether it wishes to set a standardised width for both obstacles.

ITEM 6. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

In addition to the two matters already being addressed, the Council is invited to note that the Activities Sub-Committee agreed with the principle of establishing an Equipment Panel to liaise with manufacturers and suppliers of agility equipment, and address/discuss any concerns. Therefore, the Council is requested to consider who should sit on the Equipment Panel and outline its future intentions for the body's responsibilities and/or objectives.

ITEM 7. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Mrs C Keith

Mrs O McShane

- a. Proposed Amendment to Regulation H(1)10.e. (Competing)

TO:

~~Food shall not~~ Except with the express permission of the judge, nothing shall be carried in the hand or whilst the dog is under test and food shall not be given to a dog whilst in the ring.

(Amendments underlined)

This regulation amendment is proposed as there is currently no stipulation which prevents handlers carrying training aids, leads, toys and so forth whilst the dog is under test. The regulation is currently worded to say only food shall not be carried in the hand or given to the dog in the ring and although it is custom and practice not to carry other items, there is nothing to specifically say this cannot be done. Therefore, it is suggested that marking procedure is occasionally conflicting since some judges would fault handlers carrying other items as mentioned above and some would not. Mrs Keith states that the inclusion of the words "Except with the express permission of the judge" allows the judge some discretion and would help clarify the regulation. It would also improve consistent marking procedure amongst judges.

Mrs C Keith

Mrs O McShane

- b. Proposed insertion of new Regulation H(1)(B)5.(22)(Marking)

INSERT:

Handler traverses over, under or through any piece of equipment – elimination.

(Insertion underlined)

There is currently no regulation which prevents handlers traversing over, under or through any piece of equipment. Mrs Keith suggests that this proposal is required to ensure that there is better clarification for judges. It is custom and practice that this should not be allowed and is in the interests of health and safety for both the dog and handler. Since some judges fault this action and some do not, the insertion would also ensure better consistency in judging practice.

c. Proposed Insertion of new Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(9) (Courses)

INSERT:

That all poles, bars or planks used on hurdles, must be of at least two contrasting colours.

(Insertion underlined)

Mrs Rawstorne has proposed the insertion of this new regulation since it is perceived that jump poles that are a single colour at competitions have a negative effect in blending in with the surrounding background making it difficult for the dog to adjust its depth perception when attempting to negotiate the hurdle. Concerns have been raised that this has led to some dogs not being able to assess the position of the obstacle correctly which has resulted in a collision through the obstacle leading to injury and prolonged periods of recovery. Mrs Rawstorne suggests that if the poles were of two contrasting colours this would assist the dogs' ability of depth perception and placement of the obstacle. Therefore, the proposed regulation would prevent potential injuries to dogs.

ITEM 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Obstacle Positioning within Course Design – Mrs D Hedger

Mrs Hedger, an individual, requests the Council discuss the positioning of obstacles preceding contact equipment which could cause the dog to ascend the piece of equipment at an angle. It has become an area of concern for many competitors, especially since the introduction of rubberised contact surfaces where it is perceived to be safer to have angled approaches towards contact equipment because the dogs have a better grip. Mrs Hedger explains that there are numerous ways a judge can make the course design technical and challenging for both the dog and handler without putting the dog's safety and welfare at risk. Despite the matter being covered in the judges' education programme, the Council is requested to consider whether the regulations should stipulate the positioning of an obstacle directly before a piece of contact equipment.

b. Review of Equipment Manufacturers and Suppliers – Mrs D Hedger

Mrs Hedger additionally requests the Council discuss the possibility of regulating the safety and design of agility equipment supplied by equipment manufacturers. Mrs Hedger provides an example from her personal experience when her dog fell from the up plank and was caught under the hind leg by one of the securing nuts on the Dog Walk resulting in the dog undergoing soft tissue surgery. Although Mrs Hedger appreciates this was an exceptional accident, she emphasises that any fixings should be covered or be flush with the equipment to prevent any potential incidents occurring in the future.

- c. Restricting Grades within Combined Graded Classes – Mr K Smith
Mr Smith, an individual, requests the Council discuss the possibility of restricting standard combined graded classes to a maximum of four grades. It is suggested that a standard combined grade 1-7 class is not only difficult for a judge to set a course design appropriate for the level of test, but it is also difficult to set an appropriate course time that would be effective for dogs in both the lower and higher grades. Mr Smith states that restricting these classes to contain a maximum of four grades would be easier for judges and the courses set would be more appropriate for the standard of dogs competing within them.

ITEM 9. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

To note a written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held on 7-10 August 2014.

(Annex B refers)

ITEM 10. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY

To note a written report from Mr Laker on the Performance Weekend held on 26 and 27 April 2014.

(Annex C refers)

ITEM 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be in January 2015 and will be confirmed in September 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."**