



THE KENNEL CLUB

MEETING OF THE AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2022 AT 10.00 AM IN THE BOARDROOM, THE KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET AGENDA

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 (copies previously distributed).

ITEM 3. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is invited to note that the Board, at its meeting on 5 April 2022, approved the following amendments to H Regulations:

Regulation H(1)(B)3.j.

TO:

Weaving Poles—The ~~minimum~~ number of poles should be ~~five~~ **either six or twelve** and the ~~maximum number 12~~. **The maximum number of weaves in a standard class is 12**. They should be in a continuous line, as straight as possible and should be 600mm apart (between the poles). The poles must be of rigid construction and with a minimum height of 762mm and a diameter ~~between 32mm and 38mm~~ **of 35mm**. The base must have support bars at the bottom of each pole and they must be positioned away from the side a dog would normally negotiate each pole.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2023)

ITEM 4. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

The Council is invited to note a written report from Mr Tait following the Sub-Group's meeting on 4 April 2022.

(Annex A refers)

ITEM 5. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL

There are currently no issues reported from the Equipment Panel.

ITEM 6. REPORT FROM THE AGILITY GOVERNANCE PANEL

- a. The Council is requested to consider a report from the Agility Governance Panel and to discuss a number of issues arising from the Council's previous meeting, as below.
(Annex B refers)



a. Competition Manager's role

At its meeting on 27 January 2022, the Council discussed the role of the Competition Manager, and whether rather than placing the responsibility on the shoulders of one person, the organising team should be collectively responsible for undertaking the duties of a Competition Manager, and should ensure that the necessary skill sets were in place within the team. There was some support for this, although there was also a concern that collective responsibility may be problematic if there was any disagreement within the team, and that it may be preferable for there to be one specific individual as the ultimate authority to make necessary decisions, with the proviso that he or she would be able to consult as required.

It was agreed that the Governance Panel would consider the matter further, with a view to formulating a set of criteria to be met collectively by the show management team, but with ultimate responsibility resting with the appointed Competition Manager. A firm proposal would be submitted to the Council at its next meeting.

The Council is invited to note that the Panel is looking to develop further guidance for Competition Managers to advise how they may call upon other members of the show organising team for support, whilst retaining impartiality and overall responsibility. This guidance would be available in a future version of the Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards.

b. Funding for research projects

At its previous meeting the Council, at the request of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group, considered a suggestion whereby a small levy could be placed on entries for Kennel Club licensed agility shows. This proposed levy would be used for specific purposes, such as to provide funding for additional research that would benefit all disciplines, for specific agility research, and other specific agility issues.

The Council was not of the view that any final decision could be made without further clarification as to the way in which the levy would be made, and how funds would be used. However, a show of hands indicated a small majority in favour of the general principle of the levy, for use in research projects, subject to such clarification being provided.

It agreed that its views should be referred back to the Sub-Group, and that the potential imposition of a levy to be used for other purposes should be considered by the Governance Panel.

It is invited to note that the Panel has identified two areas that need significant investment: training, support and mentoring for judges, and training and support for measurers. It is invited to note that the Governance Panel will discuss the matter further after feedback from the Sub-Group has been received, and after more work has been undertaken to identify the needs, current resources available, and problems in the areas noted above. Further information is included within the Panel's report.

c. Bitches in season competing at Kennel Club prestige invitational events

Ms J Paige had sought the Council's views on a suggestion that bitches in season should be eligible to compete at Kennel Club prestige invitation events such as at quarter and semi-finals for the Agility Stakes, The Kennel Club Agility Stakes finals, and agility competitions held at Crufts and Discover Dogs.

The Council had considered the issues involved in permitting bitches to compete in such events. A show of hands indicated the Council's support, by a majority, for the principle of the discussion item, and it was agreed that the Governance Panel would consider how it may be progressed, in conjunction with Ms Paige.



It is invited to note the Panel's views as outlined in its report, and to consider the following proposal for relevant amendments to regulations:

Regulation H.9(15)

TO:

A statement that no bitch in season is allowed to compete **at Limited, Open, Premier or Championship Agility Shows. However, bitches in season can be invited by The Kennel Club and allowed to compete at quarter finals, semi-finals and finals of Kennel Club Prestige Events if they have previously qualified for the invitational event.**

(Insertion in bold)

Regulation H.13 Removal of dogs from competition

TO:

a. A bitch which is in season **(apart from a dog competing at a prestige Kennel Club event).**

(Insertion in bold)

d. Competitors moving equipment

At its previous meeting the Council discussed issues concerning competitors moving equipment. The Council is requested to consider the following proposed amendments to H regulations, noting the Panel's views as included within its report:

New Regulation H.15

TO:

Removal of a competitor from competition. Following discussion between the show management and/or a judge, a competitor shall be prevented from competing and/or removed from an agility show if they are interfering with the safety or chance of winning of an opponent. The circumstances of such a removal shall be recorded in the competition/show incident book and submitted to the Kennel Club.

(Insertion in bold)

(Subsequent paragraphs to be re-numbered)

Rationale

This would allow the Competition Manager to ask a competitor to leave the show if they interfere with a course.

ITEM 7. REPORT FROM THE JUDGING PANEL AND OTHER JUDGING ISSUES

- a. The Council is requested to consider a report from the Judging Panel and to discuss any issues arising from it.
(Annex C refers)
- b. Activities Judges Sub-Group
A verbal update will be provided by Mr Tait following the Sub-Group's meeting due to be held on 5 May 2022.
- c. Placement of leads and rewards
At its meeting in January 2022, the Council discussed solutions as to the entry and exit procedure for the ring to prevent conflict with competitors, spectators and other dogs, primarily at the exit of the ring at the end of a run. A suggestion had been made that a dedicated and safe 'finish area' could be set, in which rewards may be given. A safe 'start zone' could also be provided, where only the competing dog and handler would



be allowed. It was also suggested that the careful placement of start and finish obstacles could also be instrumental in reducing the potential for incidents, for example setting a minimum distance from the final obstacle to the edge of the ring so as to allow time for dogs to be under control prior to exiting the ring. Alternatively, a course could be set whereby the line from the final obstacle did not constitute a straight run towards the exit.

As requested by the Council, the Judging Panel has considered how best the matter may be progressed, and its views on the matter are included within its report.

In light of the Panel's comments, the Council is particularly invited to discuss the following:

- The Panel recommends that the Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards should include examples of good practice (such as marking/fencing safe zones at the start and finish) and advice as to how show organisers and judges might mitigate against potential problems when this is not possible.
- The Panel would like to seek the view of the Council as to whether the distance for start and finish obstacles (minimum of 5m from the edge of the ring along the dog's probable line) should become a regulation.

d. Number of runs to be judged in a day

At its meeting in January 2022, the Council had considered the provisions of Regulation H(1)9.e., which stated that 'The maximum number of individual runs a person shall judge on one day is 450, excluding unforeseen eventualities such as re-runs.' Together with a suggestion that a sliding scale be introduced which would take the number of classes into account.

The Council was in full agreement with the principle, with the proviso that it would not be necessary to specify a minimum number of dogs as only a maximum would be required, and that guidance, rather than regulatory controls, would be adequate. The issue was referred to the Judging Panel for further consideration as to how it may be progressed.

The Council is invited to note that this matter will remain under review while the Panel carries out a wider review of which issues are of particular concern to judges, and how these may be addressed.

e. Electronic Contacts

The Council had considered the potential use of electronic contacts in Kennel Club competitions. It had been unanimous in its support for the use of such devices to assist judges, with the caveat that the Council would wish to be reassured on the matter of reliability. It was also emphasised that judges using such devices would still be expected to judge contacts in a visual manner, as was currently the case.

The Equipment Panel and the Judges Panel had undertaken to jointly carry out further research. The Council is invited to note that it has not as yet been possible to progress this matter, but an update would be given to the Council at its next meeting.

ITEM 8. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

- a. Mr N Ellis
Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)12.c.



Mr Ellis wishes the Council to consider a proposal to reduce the capped class limits at Kennel Club licensed Open and Limited Agility Shows

Regulation H(1)(A)12.c.

TO:

The capping level must be set at a minimum of ~~250~~ **50** entries received. There is no maximum level at which a cap may be set. Capped classes may be split into two or more parts in accordance with Regulation H(1)9.f.
(Deletion struck through. Insertions in bold)

Rationale

During the Covid-19 pandemic, The Kennel Club made a number of relaxations to H regulations to allow for the safe continuation of Kennel Club licensed events. One of these provisions was to reduce the class capping limit at Kennel Club licensed open and limited agility shows to 50. This meant that show organisers could limit the class sizes to a maximum of 50 and dogs still be awarded warrant points, grade progression points and wins still counted towards progression. This relaxation only in place until 31 December 2021, after which the capping limit reverted to 250. Mr Ellis is of the view that there were great benefits to the capping limit set at 50 that extend past Covid-19, such as the following:

- Allowing for the use of appropriate indoor arenas for competitions – as the prevalence of purpose-built indoor arenas increases, a reduced capping limit will allow for the use of these venues without the risk of overwhelming entry sizes to which a single-ring, indoor venue could not accommodate.
- Graded class sizes at shows often fall below the proposed new capping limit – more and more private individuals/businesses are hosting shows and offering a large number of graded classes per day, the majority of which have less dogs entered into each grade than the proposed new lower capping limit, some even having only single digit entries. This is not new either and was often seen at shows offering graded 1-7 classes.
- The need for performance is unchanged – the lower capping limit does not impact the need for performance; a clear round will still be required in order to be awarded warrant points, progression points, or a win that will count towards progression.

b. Mr G Derrett

Mrs S Hawkswell

Proposed amendments to Regulation H(1)(B)4

Mr Derrett wishes to propose the following amendments to the above regulation:

- (14) An additional **confirmation** measurement **will be required** ~~may be requested by the Kennel Club or a Kennel Club approved championship agility judge~~ **when a dog wins into Grade 7 or qualifies for the Agility Stakes Grand Finals or Crufts Singles final.** ~~The dog in question must have already had its final official Kennel Club measurement. The judge need not be officiating on the day the additional measurement is requested but must be in attendance at the show. No fee will be required from either the judge or the handler/owner. Any large dog which has not been through the measuring process shall not be eligible for a confirmation an additional measurement.~~
- (15) ~~The request for an additional measurement must be recorded in the show's incident book and lodged in writing at the Kennel Club within 14 days. The Kennel Club will advise the owner/handler of the dog of the requirement for an additional measure. If a dog becomes eligible for a confirmation measurement before it has had its final official Kennel Club measurement then the dog will be required to have a confirmation measurement 6 months after its final standard measurement.~~
- (16) ~~The additional~~ **confirmation** measurement must be completed within 2 months of the **dog winning into grade 7 or prior to competing at any finals where the**



measure is required ~~request being received at the Kennel Club~~ and must be undertaken by two measurers appointed by the Kennel Club from the list of senior measurers.

~~(17) The dog will continue competing at its current height until the additional measurement has been completed. The Kennel Club will confirm the results of the additional measure in due course.~~

~~(18)~~ **(17)** The height recorded at the additional **confirmation** measurement will take immediate effect.

~~(19)~~ **(18)** The additional **confirmation** measurement can only be undertaken once in a dog's lifetime

(Deletions stuck though. Insertions in bold)

(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

Rationale

There is evidence that a significant proportion of dogs competing at the top levels of Kennel Club agility are competing in the wrong height category. Measuring carried out by two Senior Kennel Club measurers (for Agility Team GB measurers up to 28 February 2022) identified a significant proportion of dogs that came forward are currently competing in the wrong height category.

8.2% of small, medium & intermediate dogs receiving a GB measure are clearly currently competing in the wrong height. This is a high percentage of mis-measures and does not include those dogs that are borderline. There are suggestions that some handlers who have dogs that might measure out of their height category pulled out of the GB try-outs process before they needed to have their dogs measured which would mean that this is possibly an underestimate of the number of dogs.

It is also worth noting that no dogs are currently running in a category above the one they should be. If the errors were purely due to the use of hoops, then there should be a similar proportion of dogs being 'mis-measured' at either end of each category.

This Confirmation measure will replace the Challenge measure, which has not been widely used and has been seen as divisive because it picked out individual dogs and questioned the integrity of individual measurers. By implementing a system that covers all dogs, all mis-measures will be picked up without questioning the skills of individual measurers.

The attached Annex summarises the data from recent GB measures and the impact on the Agility GB Team selection process.

While any measuring system cannot be flawless these proportions are significant and demonstrate an unacceptable level of errors. The number of dogs being measured for KC agility is very large. While it may be possible to improve the overall measuring process this is a long-term process and will not have an immediate impact. Data from these additional confirmatory measures could be monitored over a number of years to identify if the cause of mis-measures can be identified.

This proposal ensures that those dogs eligible to compete at the highest levels have their height status confirmed before they are able to win titles or prestigious competitions. Instead of having a 'challenge measure' available, all dogs will receive a confirmatory measure when they reach grade 7, or qualify for any of The Kennel Club's prestige event finals. These confirmatory measures will be carried out by senior measurers and will be final and binding and the dog will need to move immediately to its new height if the dog is found to be competing in a height below its new measured height.



This rule should be implemented as soon as possible (January 2023). From this date all dogs moving into Grade 7 will have two months to have their confirmation measurement. A year's grace period should be given to allow handlers to get all dogs already competing at Grade 7 their confirmation measurement (January 2024).

It is clear that there will be an initial problem as a significant number of dogs will need measuring and therefore it may be necessary to put on special measuring sessions to enable those dogs falling into this category to get measured. After this initial period it should not create significant problems for people to get their dogs a confirmatory measure once they have won up the grades. If additional senior measurers are needed, then these may need to be appointed.

(Annex D refers)

c. Mr M Tait

Proposed amendment to Regulation H1(B)5a.(6)

The Council is requested to consider the following amendment to the above regulation:

Regulation H1(B)5a.(6)

TO:

Weaving poles—The dog to enter the weaving poles with the first pole adjacent to its left side. Each incorrect entry to be classed as a refusal—further error **classed as a refusal. The dog must return to the start of the weaves on each error, maximum 5 faults**—failure to complete correctly before negotiating any further obstacle, elimination. **Handlers may be asked to move onto the next obstacle after 3 failed attempts.**

Rationale

Weaves are currently the only piece of equipment where 5 faults can result in elimination when they move onto another piece of equipment. An example is a dog that misses a contact and gets 5 faults but is allowed to continue. Ensuring dogs return to the start makes it easier and clearer for judges. It also brings marking of weaves in line with other equipment.

The wording may need to be reviewed and slightly changed by the Council but the main premise is that all weave faults should be classed as refusals and dogs must complete the weaves from the first pole to the last in one continuous movement.

ITEM 9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Mr G Derrett

Mr N Ellis

Review of Agility Certificates

In all disciplines of the Kennel Club, the Championship Certificate is regarded as the highest accolade, showcasing the very best of the best. For many agility handlers this is the most sought-after achievement in the UK and the Championship at Crufts is the most prestigious event in the agility calendar.

However, with the rapid growth and change agility has experienced in the past 10 years, there is a need for a review of the Agility Certificate to re-establish its place as the pinnacle of our sport. It has long been felt by many that there is a need for an elite Kennel Club event designed to drive British agility forward for both judges and handlers at the highest level of the discipline. Previous attempts at creating new events have been unsuccessful, due to it adding to the demands on our top-level dogs and handlers with yet more events they must push to compete at. The prestige of competing at Crufts and at The Kennel Club Agility Stakes (formerly Olympia) will always outweigh any other final in the UK and as such handlers will continue to prioritise attending shows with the Crufts and The Kennel Club Agility Stakes qualifiers over something new.



Adding additional runs at these days is not viable due to the number of runs the other qualifiers create on those days.

There is no need to create a new event or drastically change what is already established. With a few modifications and considered management, the Agility Certificate competition can return to the rightly respected event it was, one that challenges our top-level handlers, pushing them to improve and evolve so that they can excel at international competitions. This will also expose our promising partnerships to courses and judging they can expect to see at the highest level.

In brief, it is suggested that a working party should be formed to review and address the following points:

- Management of Agility Certificates
- Venues
- Number of Agility Certificates
- Judging, judges' selection and high level judges training.
- Course design guidelines

Suggested working party members:

- Prestige Events Working Party member
- Judges' Sub-Group representative
- Chairman of the Agility Liaison Council
- Agility Team GB Manager
- Two highly esteemed judges or competitors appointed by the prestige events committee.

These five topics can be broken down into many smaller elements, however this should be considered by the newly formed working party.

b. Mrs M Melville-Love

Mr N Ellis

Implementation of 5m rule for the first obstacle

Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(3) states 'All obstacles should have a minimum of 5m and up to a maximum of 10m between centres of consecutive obstacles using the straight line centre-to-centre method'.

Having been to numerous shows it has become apparent that a lot of courses are set so that the first obstacle is very close to the ring perimeter, sometimes with no more than 2-3m spacing from take-off to the first obstacle. It is appreciated that due to the size and nature of some competition facilities and ring sizes, it is not always possible to ensure a 5m space from the edge of the ring to the first obstacle. Therefore, in situations such as this, the judge would need to look at starting the dog facing towards the ring rope, i.e. jumping away from the course towards the ring edge and then turning back to the rest of the course.

It is therefore requested that the Council discuss the possibility of amending the current Regulation to state 'Should ring size allow, the first obstacle should be at least 5m from the edge of the ring. In circumstances where this is not possible, the judge should look at starting the dog jumping away from the course towards the edge of the ring.'

Rationale

There have been many studies carried out to show that a minimum of 5m between obstacles is best for an agility dogs' health and welfare. It would make sense therefore, that this should also apply from when a dog begins the test. It is noted that the dog is not travelling at speed at this point, however for a dog to fully engage the requisite muscle groups for take-off, it must first have enough speed and momentum. If a dog is



only travelling a short distance to the first obstacle, then it will not have sufficient time for this to occur, thereby giving rise to the potential for injury.

- c. Ms F Nemeth Mr N Ellis
Awarding of Prestige Events Qualifiers

Ms Nemeth wishes the Council to review the current system of only awarding prestige qualifiers to Kennel Club registered clubs, and suggests that instead, such events should be awarded based on a grading system including the following factors:

- quality of venue facilities
- competing surface
- ground conditions
- availability of camping
- score from Kennel Club representative

At the moment the only criteria that The Kennel Club asks for is clubs to be registered societies, although the venue and other facilities may not be appropriate to hold prestige events. However, some listed status clubs have excellent facilities and plenty of space but are not permitted to host these events.

Where some venues hold prestige events but may not have the facilities to offer the best value or safest running conditions this may encourage handlers to run dogs on surfaces that they may otherwise choose not to compete at, as the pressure to qualify for these events is increased with the desire to achieve Agility Team GB status.

ITEM 10. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

To note a written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held at Rutland Showground from 11-14 August 2022.

(Annex E refers – to follow)

ITEM 11. AGILITY TEAM GB

The Council is invited to note press releases issued on 4 April 2022 and 7 April 2022 regarding the selection of Agility Team GB members who will represent the UK at the Junior Open Agility World Championships in Finland from 14-17 July, the European Open Agility Championships in Belgium from 28-31 July, and the FCI Agility World Championships in Austria from 21-25 September.

(Annex F refers)

ITEM 12. STRATEGY DOCUMENT

The Council is invited to note a draft document formulated by the office in conjunction with Mr Hallam. The document sets out strategic objectives for the Council together with proposed action points and time frames. It is planned that the document will be dynamic in nature and regularly updated in line with the Council's activities and objectives.

The Council is requested to review the document and to suggest any additional items for inclusion.

(Annex G refers)



ITEM 13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Please give at least two weeks' advance notice of matters to be raised under 'Any Other Business' as this assists the office if research is required. These items are discussed at the discretion of the Chairman.

ITEM 14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the Council's next meeting will be announced in September 2022.

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 Chairman.
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 MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

'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' *This is to be achieved through:-*

- Promoting The Kennel Club as the leading national organisation for referral and advice regarding all canine related matters.
- Encouraging the responsible breeding of pedigree dogs.
- Encourage the responsible ownership of dogs.
- Facilitating the breeding of healthy dogs
- Promoting the positive benefits of dogs in society.
- Promoting and regulating canine activities and competitions.
- Providing opportunities for education and training through Kennel Club led initiatives.
- Investing in canine health and welfare.
- Engaging with the wider dog owning audience/fraternity.