

MINUTES OF THE KENNEL CLUB OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL
MEETING HELD AT 10.30 AM ON 21 JANUARY 2016
AT THE KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET

PRESENT:

Mr R Burbidge	Midlands
Mrs M Ray	Midlands
Mrs B Smith	Midlands
Mrs A Benoist	North East
Mrs D Lavender	North East
Mrs A Height	North West
Mr S Rutter	North West
Mr M McCartney	Northern Ireland
Mr J McIntosh	Scotland
Mrs C Patrick	Scotland
Mr J Farr	Wales
Mrs J Jessop	Wales
Miss F Godfrey	South East and East Anglia
Mr R Harlow	South East and East Anglia
Mr P Lubbi	South East and East Anglia
Mrs L Turner	South and South West

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs V McAlpine	Executive – Young Kennel Club (Item 8 only – paragraphs 18-33 only)
Miss D Deuchar	Manager – Canine Activities Team
Miss S Mamouzi	Specialist – Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Mitchell	Committee Secretary – Working Dog Activities Team

ITEM 1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

1. Following a ballot, Mr R Harlow was elected as Chairman. Mr Harlow wished to thank Mr Rutter, the previous Chairman, for his services to the Council.

IN THE CHAIR: MR R HARLOW

ITEM 2. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

2. In the absence of any other nominations, Mrs L Turner was elected as Vice Chairman for the new term of Council.

ITEM 3. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE EFFECTIVE FROM JUNE 2016 TO MAY 2019

3. In the absence of any other nominations, Mrs D Lavender was elected as the representative onto the Activities Sub-Committee for the above term.

ITEM 4. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

4. In the absence of any other nominations, Mrs C Patrick was elected as the representative onto the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group.

ITEM 5. PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL ON KENNEL CLUB STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

5. The Council noted a presentation which explained Kennel Club and Liaison Council structures and procedures.
6. It was clarified that notifications of forthcoming Council meetings were placed on the Kennel Club's website and that press releases were also issued to the canine press, however it was up to the canine press as to whether these were published.
7. A request was also made that a flowchart illustrating the organisational structure of the Kennel Club should be made available in order to assist grass-roots members of the Obedience community in understanding the decision-making process. It was agreed that a suitable item would be published within 'Take the Lead' which was the Kennel Club's e-newsletter for Obedience competitors.
8. Any suggestions for future items to appear in the newsletter would be welcome.
9. It was noted that the Kennel Club was in the process of updating the directory of Canine Activities Team staff members. This information would be available in due course on request by emailing cat@thekennelclub.org.uk
10. The Council noted that any correspondence with the office relating to Obedience should be emailed to obedience@thekennelclub.org.uk
11. It was noted that the Kennel Club booklet containing the 2016 G Regulations had been issued, and that it now contained a summary of any Regulations which had been amended within the previous twelve months. This was considered to be a helpful development.
12. Mr Harlow requested anyone wishing to submit a proposal or a discussion item for consideration by the Council to send him a copy of the relevant documentation.

ITEM 6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

13. Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs J Holness.

ITEM 7. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

14. The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 were signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

ITEM 8. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Amendments to Regulations

15. The Council noted that the General Committee had approved a number of amendments to the following Regulations which had been recommended for approval by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2015:
 - (i) Regulation G33.d Dogs recorded in part ownership with the Judge
 - (ii) Regulation G(A)5.f(1) Use of a silent toy in Introductory class
 - (iii) Regulation G35(g) Use of food and/or toys
 - (iv) Regulation G(C)4.h. Stays in all classes
 - (v) Regulation G(A)5.c Extra commands or encouragement in stays in Introductory class
 - (vi) In addition, the General Committee had approved an amendment to Regulation G35.d. with the proviso that the amended wording should read as follows:

Nothing may be carried, worn or displayed by a handler or a dog during judging which is capable of indicating the identity of the dog or owner nor must anything be said or any action taken which identifies the dog other than by exhibit number. **If requested by the judge or ring steward a handler may (at their choice) disclose their first name and dog's pet name for possible show report use.**

(Insertion in bold)

Commentary for obedience competitions at Crufts

16. It was noted that the Crufts Sub-Committee had agreed that commentary for the Obedience Championships would be introduced from 2016 onwards, and that this had been approved by the General Committee.
17. The Council welcomed the decision, but was keen to ensure that as the Championships were a key event in Obedience, any commentary must be of a very high standard. Suggestions were invited as to suitable individuals who may be able to provide commentary. Mrs D Cox was suggested but it was understood that she may not be available. Mrs L Turner was also suggested. These names would be passed to the Crufts Sub-Committee for consideration. It was confirmed that Mr G Paisley would be asked to undertake his normal role at Crufts.

Participation of YKC Members in Obedience

18. The Council considered the issues involved in attracting its members to participate in Obedience. The meeting was attended by Mrs V McAlpine, representing the YKC, for discussion of this item.
19. It was noted that YKC members could qualify to take part in the GCDS Special Pre-Beginner Obedience Stakes class, the final of which took place at Crufts each year, by way of a separate award for the highest placed YKC member at each heat which would qualify him or her for a place in the final.
20. However, the Council noted the difficulty of finding clubs willing to hold qualifying classes for YKC members as often there were only very few entries for such classes and the cost involved in appointing a special judge was not justified. It was unclear as to whether young handlers wished to take part in YKC classes or whether they preferred to compete in classes alongside adult handlers.
21. It was noted that questionnaires had already been sent to YKC members to canvas their views on competitive obedience, but responses had been minimal. Questionnaires had also been sent to training clubs to request their input but it was accepted that response rates to such approaches tended to be low. It was confirmed that questionnaires had only been sent to Registered Clubs, and it was suggested that as a great deal of Obedience training took place via Good Citizen Dog Scheme Listed Status Clubs, questionnaires should also be sent to them. It was agreed that this would be a positive step and Mrs McAlpine agreed to ensure that contact was made with Listed Status clubs, with the objective of encouraging young handlers to take part in the YKC Pre-Beginner Stakes competition.
22. It was confirmed that the Rebecca Pointer Trophy had been reallocated to the winner of the YKC Pre-Beginner Stakes final held at Crufts.
23. Mrs McAlpine also suggested that the Regulations relating to YKC handlers may be reviewed with the aim of simplifying them, and that input from the Council would be welcome as a part of this process.
24. There was some concern regarding younger handlers competing on equal terms against much older handlers. It was agreed that splitting classes by age group would address this issue so that handlers would be competing with others of a similar age level.
25. YKC handlers were already incorporated into standard classes at many shows.
26. It was agreed that it was important to ensure that training clubs were 'family friendly' in order to encourage participation by young handlers. Many clubs did offer excellent training for young handlers but it was not possible to formally identify them by way of a 'family friendly' directory or listing as sufficient information from clubs was not available. The Council was requested to consider ways in which clubs could be encouraged to respond to requests for information.

27. A suggestion was made that instead of special qualifying classes for YKC members, a points system be introduced similar to that used in Heelwork to Music where YKC members could gain qualifying points at any show rather than just those that held specific classes for YKC handlers. It was agreed that this was a possibility but that if such a system were to be introduced it would have to cover all shows so as not to be unfair on those scheduling YKC classes.
28. Mrs McAlpine confirmed that the YKC would be willing to publicise those shows which scheduled specific YKC classes via its e-newsletter which could be targeted to those members with an interest in Obedience.
29. The issue of child safety was raised, and it was clarified that instructors were only required to undergo a DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service - formerly known as CRB checking) if at any time unaccompanied children were alone with that instructor.
30. A suggestion was made that judges appointed to judge YKC classes at Crufts should ideally be ex-members of the YKC as this would demonstrate to young people that there was a progression route available to them within the discipline, and would encourage them to remain within it. It was acknowledged that YKC handlers were generally appreciative of being judged by ex-members who had relevant experience and expertise. The office confirmed that it would be happy to accept nominations for YKC appointments at Crufts from the Council.
31. It was noted that there were a lot of young handlers involved in breed showing and it was suggested that breed shows may offer a valuable opportunity to encourage participation in Obedience. Mrs McAlpine confirmed that if there was enough interest, consideration would be given to running Obedience training sessions or demonstrations at breed shows with the objective of attracting young handlers into the discipline.
32. The issue of good communication was raised. It was considered essential that there were good links between departments within the Kennel Club and the Obedience community which would ensure a productive flow of information, and the maximising of opportunities to promote Obedience via a range of routes.
33. Mrs McAlpine was thanked for attending the meeting. The discussion had been a positive and productive one, and it was agreed that in future there should be a stronger link between the Council and the YKC. Further discussions would take place between Mr Harlow, Mr Burbidge, and Mrs McAlpine at a later date.

Clashes of shows

34. At its previous meeting, the Council had discussed the issue of competing shows being held on the same weekend but a short distance apart, and a suggestion had been made that it should be permissible to hold two shows on the same day and at the same venue if a partnership was agreed between two clubs. Each show would be separately licensed by the Kennel Club.
35. The Council noted an update on the issue following consideration by the Activities Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee had acknowledged the potential benefits of

competitors being able to attend two shows scheduled together, and had noted that this would result in a reduction of travel costs.

36. However, it had raised a concern regarding the welfare of competing dogs, in that there was a possibility that a dog may potentially be entered into up to six classes on a single day, which was considered to be undesirable.
37. There was some concern regarding logistical issues and possible delays to judging where handlers, possibly with more than one dog, were entered into a number of classes. Careful planning would also be required in respect of management issues such as which society would be responsible in the case of an incident, or a breach of Regulations. It would also be necessary for the two organising societies to agree a cancellation policy, risk assessments, and emergency planning.
38. The Council noted the Sub-Committee's decision that, should two clubs wish to hold shows on the same day and at the same venue, an application should be made to the Kennel Club for consideration on its own merits. Clubs would be expected to provide evidence that the shows could be run without undue difficulties and that the issues outlined above had been given careful consideration and that suitable plans were in place.

ITEM 9. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

39. The Council discussed the Five Year Strategic Plan.
40. As discussed earlier in the meeting, it was suggested that more use should be made of all channels of communication in order to maximise opportunities to promote Obedience. For example, it was suggested that all handlers obtaining a Gold Good Citizens award should be targeted to encourage them to take part in competitive Obedience. However, it was accepted that some handlers who gained Good Citizens awards merely wished to have a well-behaved pet and may have no interest in competing.
41. An issue was highlighted where, due to entries closing well in advance of shows, handlers having qualified out of a class were obliged to continue to compete in that class for some time, and as a result in some cases were 'blocking' wins by other handlers. It was noted that in Agility, in the event of a dog becoming eligible for the next grade at a show more than 25 days before that show, but after the entry had been made, it was the competitor's responsibility to notify the show secretary at least 14 days before the date of the show. The dog would then be moved into the appropriate class(es) for the next grade.
42. The Council was of the view that in principle, the introduction of a similar system for Obedience would be desirable, but that it would be necessary to consider the effects on show organisers who would be required to manage the effects of such a change, such as making relevant amendments to running orders. Amendments to G Regulations would also be required to implement the change.

43. It was noted that at its meeting on 1 July 2014, Mrs Turner, Mr Harlow and Mr Lubbi had volunteered their services for a Working Party, the remit of which was to consider the five-year strategy for Obedience. It was agreed that this Working Party, with the additions of Miss Godfrey and Mr McCartney would give further consideration to the suggestion, including obtaining feedback from show organisers. A formal proposal would in due course be submitted to the Council.
44. The Working Party would also consider other ideas for the ongoing promotion of Obedience, including the issue of improved communications between all parties with a potential interest in Obedience.
45. It was suggested that Agility shows and Obedience shows could be run together, although it was accepted that there may be logistical issues such as a lack of space at some venues, and the difficulty of co-ordinating suitable dates in a crowded show calendar.
46. It was acknowledged that competitive Obedience should be an enjoyable activity for all concerned and it was important to encourage handlers, especially those new to the discipline. Judges in particular played an important role in providing such encouragement.

ITEM 10. PROPOSALS

Proposed amendment to Regulation G35.c Competing and consequent amendment to the wording of 6.6.1 in The Guide for Obedience Judges.

47. Mrs Turner proposed the amendment, which had been submitted by Mr R Becque.
48. Mr Becque's view was that being allowed to use a dog in the planning of the test round was of benefit to the judge, the steward, and competitors, especially in the higher classes as it enabled the position of the judge in relation to the dog to be worked out and to identify any potential blind spots. It would also allow the steward to place him/her self in the best position so as to avoid impeding either the Judge or competitors.
49. No seconder was available and the matter was not discussed further.

Proposed amendment to Regulation G19.a. Facilities

50. Miss Godfrey, representing Mrs L Bennett, presented the proposal, which was seconded by Mr Lubbi.
51. Mrs Bennett requested that the Council consider the proposed amendment on the grounds that existing Regulations only stated that stay ring sizes should be 'adequate'. Mrs Bennett's view was that if dogs were allowed more space between them, some of the stresses involved with the stay exercise could be alleviated.
52. Mrs Bennett proposed that stay rings must be of an adequate size to allow for a 2m (6ft) gap between dogs and to accommodate the largest expected entry. The

Council was of the view that although G Regulations specified that there must be adequate space, a 2m gap was excessive and would also be impractical as it would necessitate very large stay rings which could not be accommodated at some venues. It considered that a gap of 3 feet, or 1 metre, would be more practical. There was also a view that stays were a group exercise and that too large a gap between dogs would not reflect this.

53. It was highlighted that it was the responsibility of the Chief Steward to check that the stay ring was of adequate size, and that should circumstances dictate, he or she had the authority to alter tests, or to split stays if necessary. It was agreed that the responsibilities of the Chief Steward in this regard would be highlighted by the Council Chairman in an article to be published in the Kennel Club's Obedience newsletter, 'Take the Lead'.
54. It was agreed that it was not desirable to be too prescriptive on this issue but that show organisers must give careful consideration to the size of stay rings to ensure that they were of adequate size.
55. Accordingly, although the Council was understanding of the rationale behind the proposed amendment, it did not recommend it for approval.

ITEM 11. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Harsh handling

56. Mrs Turner wished to raise the issue of harsh handling and how concerns on this matter may be addressed. It was accepted that there were differing views on what constituted harsh handling, and that the issue was highly subjective.
57. It was acknowledged that in the ring a Judge's decision was paramount and that any behaviour considered to be unacceptable should be reported to the Kennel Club, and the handler dismissed from the ring. However, it was not possible to make any clear definition of what constituted unacceptable behaviour. It was therefore up to the judge to exercise his or her own discretion. Should a judge have strong views on a particular method of handling he or she may place a note on the judging table pointing out any handling methods that they did not consider to be acceptable.
58. It was clarified that where a handler had been dismissed from the ring, the judge must go immediately to the show secretary's office to report the incident.
59. The office confirmed that all incidents occurring at shows were logged, including those noted as having been resolved at the show.
60. The Council was of the view that common sense should prevail, and that judges training should include suitable guidance on the issue of harsh handling. The matter would also be addressed via the Chairman's report in the Kennel Club's newsletter.

Length of heelwork in Novice and other classes

61. Mrs Turner spoke on behalf of Mrs Delia Steadman and Mrs Chris Moss, who requested the Council to discuss their observation that some judges were setting Novice rounds which appeared to be quite long, and in some cases were longer than subsequent higher classes.
62. It was acknowledged that judges had discretion as to the length of a heelwork round, subject to the guide timetable contained within the G Regulations regarding the number of dogs to be judged per hour. It was agreed that the timetable had not been updated for some time and that a review was necessary.
63. It was not considered desirable to set prescriptive limits on the length of a round, or the number of turns or halts, but it was agreed that judges training should include guidance as to what constituted an appropriate round for each class.
64. Should a competitor consider that a round was unsuitable, a report could be made in the show's Incident Book.
65. The Council agreed that the issue should be addressed by means of judges training and that no further action was necessary.

Dogs being entered under their breeder

66. Mrs Jessop presented the discussion item on behalf of Ms P Hirsch who wished the Council to discuss a suggestion that a new Regulation be introduced, similar to that which applied to breed showing, which would prevent a dog being entered under its breeder, or its breeder's spouse.
67. The Council expressed a view that it was important that the integrity of judges should not be called into question. There was no support for the item and it was not discussed further.

ITEM 12. ACTIVITIES HEALTH & WELFARE SUB-GROUP

68. The Council noted the written report from the office on the recent work of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group.
69. The Sub-Group noted that it was unclear whether there was an issue relating to head carriage within Obedience. The Council's view was that very few dogs were worked with their heads in an exaggerated position.
70. It was noted that the Sub-Group had reviewed equine research for the purposes of comparison, but the Council was of the view that the conformation of dogs was very different to that of horses and that equine research was not helpful when considering issues relating to dogs. There was a possibility that further research on the matter may be undertaken in the future by a student at Nottingham Trent University.

71. The Council noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Group would take place on 27 January 2016. Mrs Patrick would attend on behalf of the Council, subject to work commitments.

ITEM 13. ACTIVITIES JUDGES WORKING PARTY

72. The Council noted a report submitted by Mrs Garner on the Judges Working Party following its meeting on 10 November 2015. It was noted that the report had been provided by Mrs Garner as neither Mr Rutter nor Mr Page had been able to attend the Working Party's meeting.
73. The Council was pleased to note the Kennel Club's plans to introduce e-learning for judges which it viewed as a positive step forward. This method of learning may be particularly attractive to younger handlers.

ITEM 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

74. Council members were requested to note that the Chairman should be advised of any items for discussion under Any Other Business, in advance of the meeting.

Crufts tickets

75. In response to a query from Mrs Turner regarding the way in which seating around the Obedience ring at Crufts was sold, it was clarified that only one block of seats was made available for ticket sale beforehand. Other areas were open to the general public on the day.

Obedience Stand at Crufts

76. Mrs Benoist and Mrs Lavender confirmed that they would once again be organising the stand at Crufts, and that any assistance from Council members would be welcome.

Judging experience

77. A query was raised regarding some newly-qualified judges who were undertaking judging appointments for C classes having only previously undertaken judging at Novice level. It was agreed that this issue should be addressed as part of judges training.

Obedience World Cup

78. The Council wished to record its disappointment at the decision to discontinue the World Cup competition at Crufts with effect from 2016. It was highlighted that many overseas teams were keen to compete and would no longer have the opportunity to do so.

ITEM 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

79. The Council noted that the date of the next meeting of the Council would take place on 6 July 2016 and any items for the agenda must be submitted by 7 April 2016.
80. Those present were thanked for attending. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16.35 p.m.

R HARLOW
Chairman

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.
- Achieving a widening of the Kennel Club membership base.
- Encouraging the development of all those concerned with dogs through education and training.
- Encouraging more people to provide input in the Kennel Club's decision making process.

Kennel Club Obedience Liaison Council Representatives

1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018

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