

**MINUTES OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD AT THE KENNEL CLUB ON 21 JANUARY 2016**

**PRESENT:**

Mrs Y Croxford	Midlands
Ms J Harker	North East
Mr K Smith	North East
Mr A Dornford-Smith	Northern Ireland
Mrs P Baltes	North West
Mr M Hallam	North West
Ms S Hawkswell	Scotland
Mr C Huckle	South and South West
Mr S Chandler	South East and East Anglia
Mr I McDonald	South East and East Anglia
Mr M Cavill	Wales

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr D Jolly (Item 8 only)	Chairman, Activities Health & Welfare Sub-Group
Miss D Deuchar	Manager, Canine Activities
Miss R Mansfield	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**  
**(JANUARY 2016 – DECEMBER 2018)**

1. In the absence of any other nominations, Mr Cavill was elected as Chairman for the new term of the Council.

**IN THE CHAIR: MR M CAVILL**

**ITEM 2. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL**  
**(JANUARY 2016 – DECEMBER 2018)**

2. Following a ballot, Mrs Croxford was elected as Vice Chairman for the term of the Council.

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

3. Following a ballot, Mr Chandler was elected as the Council's representative onto the Activities Sub-Committee for the above period of office.

#### **ITEM 4. PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL ON KENNEL CLUB STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES**

4. The Council noted the presentation which explained Kennel Club and Liaison Council's structure and procedures. New representatives were welcomed to the meeting and the role of Council representatives was clarified.

#### **ITEM 5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

5. Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs J Gardner and Miss L Olden.

#### **ITEM 6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

6. The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015 were signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

#### **ITEM 7. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. The Council noted that at its meeting on 6 October 2015, the General Committee approved the following changes to the regulations, with effect from 1 January 2016:
  - (i) Regulation H(1)9.e Appointment of an additional judge in Championship classes
  - (ii) Regulation K3.c. Agility Warrants
8. The Council was pleased to note the introduction of Platinum and Diamond Agility Warrants. It was clarified by the office that points could be claimed only from 1 January 2016 and not retrospectively so as to offer additional objectives for competitors to work towards.

##### Recognition of Agility as a sport

9. The Council was advised that the office was in the process of preparing a pre-application document for submission to the Sports Council. A great deal of detailed information was required for the document, and the assistance of Council members was requested. A copy of the document would be circulated to all Council members, and their input would be appreciated. Mr Cavill would liaise with the office in order to prepare the finalised pre-application, which would be submitted to the Sports Council as soon as possible.

##### Proposed Amendment of Regulation H 28.a.(9) (Disqualification and Forfeit of Awards)

10. The Council noted the views of the Activities Sub-Committee regarding the proposed amendment, which would allow a judge to judge dogs handled by his or her spouse, immediate family or resident at the same address as the scheduled judge, other than in Championship Classes and Kennel Club supported events. The Sub-Committee had strongly reiterated its original decision not to recommend the proposed amendment for approval.

### Structure of the Council

11. The Council had requested that the Sub-Committee consider reducing the three-year embargo on Regulation changes to two and a half years, on the basis that a three-year embargo would not enable it to bring to fruition any proposals made as a result of its consideration of strategic issues, within a single term of office. It was noted that the Sub-Committee had accepted the views expressed by the Council, and clarified that its intention was to allow it to make recommendations within a single term of office.

### Grade changes

12. It was agreed that a review of the grading structure should be added to the Five Year Plan. However it was accepted that a considerable amount of work would be involved in carrying out such a review, and that it would be necessary to give careful consideration of all of the implications for Agility as a whole.

### Breakaway Tyre

13. The Council had discussed the breakaway tyre at its meeting on 22 January 2015. Subsequently, the Equipment Panel had seen and approved the breakaway tyre manufactured by Jaycee Jumps, and the Activities Sub-Committee had approved its use. A Press Release had been issued on 30 November 2015. On this particular design, the lower 'breakaway' section of the tyre was held in place by magnets, and, if hit by a dog, the lower section would be dislodged. It had been clarified within the Press Release that should the lower section be dislodged, the dog would incur 5 faults.
14. It was confirmed that, to date, no other manufacturers had submitted designs. However, it was agreed that should other designs be received, these would be subject to the approval of the Equipment Panel.
15. It was confirmed that at present, use of either the conventional tyre or the breakaway tyre was acceptable under Kennel Club Regulations. It would be for the Equipment Panel to discuss, in due course, whether the conventional tyre should eventually be phased out, but there were no immediate plans to do so. It was agreed that the matter could be considered by the Council at its next meeting should other options become available.
16. The Council noted that there was no current Regulation which required show organisers to ensure consistency of equipment in all rings. However, it was considered to be highly desirable that there should be consistency, and should a breakaway tyre be used in one ring, the same design should also be used in other rings.
17. A query was raised as to whether a list of approved equipment was available for use as a reference by judges and show organisers. The office confirmed that no such list was available but that all changes to approved equipment were publicised within the Kennel Club's Agility newsletter, The Scribe. It was agreed that it would be helpful for a list of approved equipment to be added to the Judges Guide to Agility Equipment which was available on the Kennel Club's website. The office would make the necessary amendments to the document.

18. It was noted that equipment suppliers were required within their contracts to supply only equipment which had been approved by the Kennel Club. However judges were ultimately responsible for their own rings and should not use any item of equipment that they considered to be sub-standard or unsafe.

## **ITEM 8. REVIEW OF HURDLE HEIGHTS**

19. Mr D Jolly, Chairman of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group, joined the meeting for this item, having been requested to provide an update on the review of hurdle heights.
20. The Council was informed that ongoing research was taking place via the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group and that several papers had been published. However the process of research was lengthy and could not provide immediate and definitive answers. There had been demand from competitors, including the 4th Height Supporters Group, for hurdle heights to be reviewed, and the issue had been referred to the Activities Sub-Committee following an open letter sent to the Chairman of the Kennel Club.
21. The main points of Mr Jolly's presentation were as follows:
- There was no evidence available to date which suggested that the current heights being jumped were prejudicial or injurious to a dog's health
  - Some dogs by virtue of their breed, size and shape may experience more difficulties in negotiating a fixed height of hurdle than others
  - The Kennel Club wished to take the opportunity to address concerns for ALL heights of dog, whilst ensuring that show organisers retained choice over what they wished to schedule, and that competitors would have choice of the jump height they perceived to be suitable for their dog
  - There was a need for ongoing research
22. Taking into account all of the above considerations, the General Committee had approved the implementation of a Lower Height Option (LHO), the main details of which were as follows:
- LHO would be open to all dogs in that height
  - To be run in conjunction with any Standard class as defined in the 'H' Regulations
  - One class with two heights
  - Change part way through to higher/lower the jump heights
  - Competitors must run at their entered height
  - Height change would only occur once either higher to lower, or lower to higher
  - Lower Height Option hurdle heights must be as follows:
    - Small 25cm, Medium 35cm and Large 55cm
  - All other equipment to be set as defined in the 'H' Regulations
  - Awards:
    - one set of awards by combining the results of each height
    - or may offer separate awards for each height category

- Must be specified on the schedule
  - Progression:
    - Wins gained at the LHO in Standard classes count towards progression at Standard height and vice versa
    - LHO wins would not count for Championship class eligibility
  - All Championship classes and Kennel Club supported events would continue to be run at the current heights of 35cm, 45cm and 65cm
  - The class listing on the schedule would need to identify which classes would have the LHO
23. The Council was also advised of the amendments to Regulations which had been approved by the General Committee in relation to implementation of the Lower Height Option. The amended Regulations would come into effect on 1 July 2016.
24. It was confirmed that a Press Release detailing the changes was to be issued immediately, together with a Frequently Asked Questions document which would assist show organisers and competitors in understanding the changes. The above documents may be viewed at:  
[www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/743020/press\\_release\\_2016\\_agility\\_the\\_kennel\\_club\\_announce\\_the\\_introduction\\_lower\\_height\\_option\\_jumps\\_v8.pdf](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/743020/press_release_2016_agility_the_kennel_club_announce_the_introduction_lower_height_option_jumps_v8.pdf)  
 and  
[www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/743024/agility\\_2016\\_lower\\_height\\_faqs\\_v3.pdf](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/743024/agility_2016_lower_height_faqs_v3.pdf)
25. Following a query, it was clarified that societies may continue to offer any special classes as previously. The height of hurdles must be stated in the schedule.
26. It was not anticipated that there would be any major difficulties for show entry processors.
27. Mr Jolly was thanked for his very informative presentation.
28. The Council was of the view that introduction of the Lower Height Option was a positive step, constituting a good response to demands from the agility community as it enabled both show organisers and competitors to make choices as to jump heights. It accepted that some 'teething problems' may occur, but acknowledged that the changes had been made in the interests of the majority of competitors. Potential concerns from show societies had also been addressed in terms of minimising the changes required to show administration. The Lower Height Option also allowed for flexibility in the future depending on the outcome of any further research.
29. The Council wished to record its support for the Lower Height Option, and its thanks for those who had been involved in its development.

## **ITEM 9. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL**

30. The Council was of the view that the Equipment Panel was making a valuable contribution to Agility, and that it was necessary for it to continue its work. It currently consisted of Mr Cavill, Mrs Gardner, Mr Hallam, and Mr Chandler. Mr Mallabar was

no longer a member and Mr Cavill stated his wish to stand down from the Panel. It was agreed that Mr Smith and Mr Huckle would be appointed to the Panel.

31. It was confirmed that the Panel would carry out appropriate investigations into any item of equipment which had been reported to it as being potentially hazardous or non-compliant with Kennel Club Regulations. However changes would only be made to equipment where there was clear evidence that such a change was necessary.
32. It was agreed that Mrs Gardner, with the help of the Equipment Panel, would produce a formal document stating the remit of the equipment panel and the process for approval of equipment.
33. The Council wished to note its thanks for the work carried out by Mr Mallabar as a member of the Equipment Panel. In particular Mr Mallabar had carried out extensive and very useful research regarding the collapsible tunnel, which would be discussed later in the meeting.

#### Aluminium wall

34. It was noted that that the aluminium wall supplied by First Contact had been approved for use by the Panel.

#### Wall

35. The Council discussed a wall which had been used at a recent show which had interlocking inserts and uprights. Noting that the current regulations only stated that a wall should have displaceable units on the top, it was agreed that the Equipment Panel should consider whether it was acceptable for elements of the Wall to be interlocked.

#### Breakaway Tyre

36. The breakaway tyre had been discussed earlier in the meeting (paragraphs 13-16 refer.)

#### Future plans

37. It was the intention of the Panel to investigate the use of small jump wings which were being used at some shows. It was suggested that the Equipment Panel should also be requested to consider the potential impact of the LHO and the use of spread and long jumps, and the use of the tyre for small dogs.

### **ITEM 10. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP**

38. The Council noted that the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group had met on 2 September 2015.

#### Dog Agility Incident Forms

39. The Council noted that at the above meeting, the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group had discussed the use of Dog Agility Incident Forms (as used at the International Agility Festival) at other shows in order to enable a fuller picture of equipment-related incidents at agility shows to be understood. It had agreed that completed forms should be returned to show secretaries who may collate the

information and forward it to the Kennel Club should they wish to draw a particular issue to its attention. The Council noted that the form was available to download from the Kennel Club website at:

[http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/718294/agility\\_2015\\_incident\\_report\\_form\\_for\\_website.pdf](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/718294/agility_2015_incident_report_form_for_website.pdf)

40. It was confirmed that use of the forms was not compulsory, but it was suggested that show organisers should have a supply available so that reports may be made where an incident had occurred, or where there was considered to be an area of concern to be highlighted. Should the Kennel Club be made aware of consistent reports regarding any areas of concern, the matter would be referred to the Activities Health & Welfare Sub-Group, or to the Equipment Panel, as appropriate, for investigation.
41. Should a judge have concerns that the report may not be forwarded to the Kennel Club by the show organisers, he or she may send it directly to the Working Dog Activities department at the Kennel Club or it may be emailed to [agility@thekennelclub.org.uk](mailto:agility@thekennelclub.org.uk)
42. It was clarified that the objective of the form, which may only be completed by judges, was to identify generalised issues regarding equipment rather than specific items of faulty equipment. Any specific incidents, such as a dog being injured or having an accident, should continue to be logged in the show's incident book.
43. It was agreed that judges should be encouraged to use the form where necessary. A Press Release would be issued to draw attention to it, and an item would also appear in The Scribe. A copy of the form would also be provided during judges training.
44. It was suggested that a link to the form may be provided by show organisers in contract documentation sent to judges. This was considered to be an excellent idea. Alternatively, a hard copy may be placed in the ring box at the show.

## **ITEM 11. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

45. No proposals had been received.

## **ITEM 12. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### Collapsible Tunnel

46. The Council considered a short report provided by Mr Mallabar detailing his research into the Collapsible Tunnel. He was of the view that recent research may give the Council more evidence with which to consider the specification of the tunnel. The Council was requested to consider whether modifying the specification would be beneficial to competing dogs.
47. The Council wished to record its thanks to Mr Mallabar for presenting a thorough and very helpful document.

48. It noted that some judges were no longer including the Collapsible Tunnel in their courses due to perceptions regarding its safety. It did not wish to see obstacles falling into disuse due to such perceptions and agreed that it was important to address the issue.

49. It had been thought that many of the issues relating to the Collapsible Tunnel related to its positioning within the course, but Mr Mallabar's research had identified other features of the tunnel which warranted further discussion. These were:

- Size of the entrance to the rigid part of the Tunnel  
It was noted that at present the Regulations stated only a minimum entrance height of 483mm (1ft 7ins). It was suggested that a standardised height may be beneficial in allowing dogs to know exactly what to expect at any show. A height of 2 ft was suggested, to bring it into line with the height of a Pipe Tunnel.

- Fabric specification (sailcloth or nylon)  
The Council noted that the research indicated that the use of a sailcloth material was preferable to nylon, which, although lighter, was more slippery and had a tendency to wrap around the dog and to impede its progress through the obstacle. It considered whether it would be possible to specify a weight for the fabric, but it was accepted that there were some difficulties in doing so, and it would not be possible to enforce any such specifications as there would be no way of making checks on equipment used at shows. It was also accepted that it was difficult to define 'non-slip' as part of a fabric specification.

It was agreed that this issue should be addressed by the Equipment Panel who could discuss the matter with manufacturers to assess whether it would be possible to formulate a specification for the material to be used.

- Use of parallel or flared chute  
It appeared that dogs experienced fewer difficulties in negotiating the Collapsible Tunnel when the chute was flared rather than parallel. The Equipment Panel would be asked to consider a specification for the degree of flare.
- Length of the chute  
The Council noted that on the basis of evidence supplied by Mr Mallabar, it appeared that a shorter chute enabled dogs to negotiate the obstacle more easily and it was agreed that a length of approximately 6 feet would be suitable.

50. In summary, it was agreed that the Equipment Panel would be requested to give the matter further consideration and to formulate a detailed proposal based on the following parameters:

- Size of entrance to be standardised at 61 cm (24 inches)
- Fabric specification to be agreed
- Chute to be flared
- Chute to be approximately 183 cm (6 feet) in length
- A recommendation as to whether older versions of the Collapsible Tunnel may still be used, or whether, from a specified date, an updated version must be used.

### Timing Failures

51. Mr Huckle presented the item on behalf of Mr M Bacon, who wished to raise concerns regarding dogs being stopped by the ring party in mid run due to a timing failure.
52. The Council wished to reiterate the information given during judges training that ring stewards should be briefed carefully by the judge, and should be watching the judge rather than the timing. It also highlighted that a dog which had been faulted was not entitled to a re-run in the event of a timing failure.
53. It was highlighted that all judges and stewards should familiarise themselves with the Kennel Club's 'Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards' booklet and should be aware of the correct procedures. The booklet was available on the Kennel Club website at <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/24814/agjudgesguide.pdf>
54. The Council did not consider that there was a significant issue in relation to timing failures but it was agreed that guidance would be issued via The Scribe.

### Startline Rule

55. Mr Huckle, speaking on behalf of Mr M Bacon, invited the Council to consider the practice by some competitors of starting the dog by taking it past the first jump, setting it up and then sending it back around the jump.
56. The Council acknowledged that the practice did not contravene any Kennel Club Regulation and was quite acceptable. It was reiterated that judges should not fault competitors who chose to set up their dogs in this way, and competitors who considered that they had been unfairly marked should make a report in the show's incident book.
57. It was strongly recommended that judges should keep themselves up to date with current Regulations and guidelines.

### Control of scribe tickets

58. The discussion item was presented by Mr Huckle, speaking on behalf of Mr M Bacon who had noted that it had become common practice for scribe tickets to be handed to competitors when booking in with the collecting ring steward. Mr Bacon was concerned that these practices may give rise to confusion and greatly increase the possibility of errors occurring.
59. However, the Council was not aware of any evidence of errors caused by the practice, and was of the view that it was up to show organisers to deal with the handling of scribe tickets, whilst ensuring that measures were in place to minimise errors.

## **ITEM 13. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY**

60. The Council noted the items on its five year strategic plan.
61. It agreed that it was necessary to take a thoughtful and positive approach towards major issues affecting the future of agility and its development. It was suggested that all Council representatives should consult members of the agility community in order to

compile a list of what were considered to be the major issues affecting agility. Such lists would be circulated to Council members and collated to identify key items for discussion by the Council at its next meeting.

62. It was also agreed that the format of the strategic plan document should be reviewed as at present it did not contain dates or detailed action points. These details, together with an indication of the individuals who had agreed to undertake tasks, would be necessary in order to ensure that plans were progressed.
63. A revised plan would be considered at the Council's next meeting.
64. In the meantime the office was thanked for its help in achieving some of the objectives listed on the plan.

#### Grading Panel

65. It was agreed that a review of the grading structure was necessary and should be undertaken as soon as possible by a Grading Panel which would consist of Mrs Baltes, Ms Harker, Ms Hawkswell, Mr McDonald, Mrs Croxford, and Mr Dornford-Smith. The Panel would operate on an informal basis.
66. It was suggested that initial research could be carried out by obtaining information from show organisers and from show processors. Mr Hallam also offered to provide information from his son's dissertation which would be helpful.
67. The Grading Panel would report back to the Council at its meeting in July.

### **ITEM 14. ACTIVITIES JUDGES WORKING PARTY**

68. The Council noted a written report from Mr Huckle on the progress of the Judges Working Party following its meeting on 10 November 2015.

#### Mentoring of First Time Agility Judges

69. It was noted that mentoring was going well. It was highlighted that it was not essential for a mentor to be present at a show but could provide support to a new judge beforehand by telephone or email.

#### Continuing Personal Development of Existing Judges

70. There had been considerable progress on the Continuing Professional Development of existing judges. Progress would continue to be monitored by the Judges Working Party.

#### Judging Procedure and Course Designs

71. The Judges Working Party had proposed the introduction of an Open Book examination for the assessment of the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination, with the aim of providing more time for the Judging Procedure and Course Design Seminar and to familiarise potential judges with the use of the Regulations booklet to clarify queries. However, the Training Board's view was that an Open Book examination would not be helpful in developing judges' understanding of Kennel Club Regulations and accordingly had not supported the proposal.

Judges Trainers

72. The office was in the process of collating a list of the Judges Trainers to identify those that had either not attended the requisite numbers of annual seminars or carried out any recent training.

Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards

73. The Guide was in the process of being reviewed. The Judges Guide to Agility Equipment would also be reviewed and updated.
74. Mr Huckle confirmed his willingness to remain on the Judges Working Party as an Agility representative.

**ITEM 15. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY TEAMS**

75. The Council noted a report on Agility Team GB's attendance at the 2015 European Open Championships and at the World Championships.
76. It wished to record its congratulations to Team GB for achieving a gold medal and other placings at the World Championships.
77. It was noted that training and squad selection for the European Open Championships and the World Championships in 2016 was already under way.

**ITEM 16. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL**

78. The Council noted a written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held on 11-14 August 2016.
79. The Festival held in 2015 had been highly successful and the Council wished to note its congratulations to all those who had been involved in its organisation.

**ITEM 17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Competing at Olympia

80. The Council discussed the issue of the number of dogs competing at Olympia. Under new rules, 20 dogs would qualify to take part in the Novice Stakes and in the Senior Stakes finals at Olympia. Current rules allowed for one handler to compete with two different dogs. However, a suggestion was made that this should be changed to allow one handler to compete only with one dog as from a sponsorship viewpoint it was preferable for 20 dogs to run with 20 different handlers.
81. It was noted that the rules allowed for one handler to run two dogs due to a perception that if a handler had qualified with two dogs, it was unfair to allow him or her to only compete with one of them. However, it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the Prestige Events Working Party for further consideration, with the suggestion that only the first dog qualified by any one handler would be eligible to compete in the

evening final. A handler qualifying two dogs would not be allowed to select which one to run. There was some concern that there may be logistical issues during the evening final if some handlers were competing with more than one dog, and may not have adequate time to recover between runs.

#### Measurers Assessments

82. There was some concern regarding forthcoming Measurers Assessments, in that some measurers had indicated that they were unable to attend any of the planned sessions and would therefore lose their accreditation as a measurer. In addition, some measurers had expressed concerns that they would have to travel long distances in order to undertake an assessment lasting approximately 15-20 minutes.
83. The concerns were noted and the office agreed that efforts would be made to arrange an additional Measurers Assessment session. However, it was reiterated that those measurers unable to attend any of the assessments would no longer be able to undertake measuring on behalf of the Kennel Club.

#### **ITEM 18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

84. The date of the next meeting would be 14 July 2016. Any items for the agenda must be submitted by 15 April 2016.
85. There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 15.20 pm.

**M CAVILL**  
**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.”

**Agility Liaison Council Representatives**  
**1 January 2016 – 31 December 2018**

Listed below are the Area Liaison Council Representatives that can be contacted should further information be required on any of the items.

**SCOTLAND**

Mrs Sara Hawkswell, 4 Woodbank Crofts, Westfield, Bathgate EH48 3AT  
Tel: 07960 953925 Email: hawkswells@yahoo.co.uk

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

Mr Adrian Dornford-Smith, 4 Rusheyhill Road, Lisburn, County Antrim BT28 3TD  
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**WALES**

Mr Martin Cavill, 15 Gerbera Drive, Rogerstone, Newport, NP10 9JD  
Tel: 07866 438719 Email: [martin.cavill@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:martin.cavill@yahoo.co.uk)

**NORTH WEST**

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Mr Mike Hallam, Hollins View, Leek Road, Bosley, Macclesfield, SK11 0PP  
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**NORTH EAST**

Mr Kevin Smith, 30 Holland Park Drive, Jarrow Tyne & Wear NE32 4LL  
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Ms Joanne Harker, 23 Dale Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 8LX  
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**MIDLANDS**

Mrs Jackie Gardner, 17 Middlesmoor, Wilnecote, Tamworth, B77 4PL  
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Mrs Yvonne Croxford, Shade Cottage, Coventry Road, Wigston Parva, Hinckley, LE10 3AP  
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**SOUTH EAST & EAST ANGLIA**

Mr Simon Chandler, 16 Hawth Hill, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 2RW  
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Mr Iain McDonald, Silvermere Lodge, Redhill Road, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1EQ  
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**SOUTH & SOUTH WEST**

Mr Chris Huckle, Kingswold, Glenmore, Roborough, Devon, EX19 8TE  
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Miss Lesley Olden, Birchwood House Cottage, Sherfield English, Nr Romsey, Hants, SO51 6FF  
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# Lower jump height option in Agility introduced by The Kennel Club

21 January 2016 00:00

A new lower height option for agility jumps is being introduced by the Kennel Club, effective from 1st July 2016, which will allow agility shows to include a lower height jump for each competition size.

For some time now, there has been a call for the introduction of an additional jump height of 55cm for large dogs (which has been popularly referred to amongst agility competitors as the 'fourth height'). There have also been representations to consider a further height to be introduced below the current 35cm small dog height. The decision to introduce a lower jump height option will allow for this to happen.

Representations made to the Kennel Club regarding jump heights have raised the opportunity to address issues for all heights of dog. In order to provide substantiated advice regarding the jump height debate, the Kennel Club has commissioned research to fully understand the impact of jump heights on dogs. This research is likely to take some considerable time before it is concluded and the findings made available to inform the debate.

Kathryn Symns, Kennel Club Canine Activities Executive, said: "We have listened to ongoing representations made by agility competitors to inform the introduction of the new lower height option, and this decision will allow shows to schedule this height at their discretion.

"It is important that any changes to the regulations do not detract from what is already on offer at agility shows, as many competitors believe that there are currently no issues associated with jump heights for their dogs, and therefore wish the status quo to be maintained.

"It is also imperative that show organisers retain the choice over what they schedule. This change allows for the new height, whilst competitors still have a choice of jump height which they believe to be suitable for their dog."

More details on the lower height option and a set of accompanying FAQs can be found at [www.thekennelclub.org.uk/activities/agility/competitors-section-agility/](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/activities/agility/competitors-section-agility/).

The new Lower Height Option regulations are as follows:

H10(c).(11) Schedule

Definitions of classes. **Classes that will include the Lower Height Option must be specified together with whether there will be separate awards for each height.**

(Insertion in bold).

Insert new Regulation H(1)(A)4. and renumber accordingly.

**All rounds of a Championship Agility Class and any Kennel Club heat, semi-final or final must be run at Full Height.**

(Insertion in bold).

Insert new Regulation H(1)(A)7 and renumber accordingly.

**Lower Height Option. Societies may offer the Lower Height Option to all dogs in that height category and may be offered at all grades. It is to be run as part of any Standard class as defined in these regulations and must be clearly identified in the schedule. When the Lower Height Option is scheduled a dog may only be entered at either the Full height or at the Lower Height and cannot compete at a different height in any class at that competition. For these purposes a competition shall be defined as all classes covered within the same schedule. Each relevant class will have two heights with a change part way through to higher/lower the jump heights and competitors must run at their entered height. The order in which the heights will run must be detailed on the ring cards/ring plan. There will be only one course walking at the start of the class. In a class where the Lower Height Option is available show organisers may offer one set of awards by combining the results of each height or may offer separate awards for each height category.**

(Insertion in bold).

H(1)(A)8. Progression (was previously H(1)(A)6.)

**Progression.** Progression from each Grade will require one Agility win or three Jumping wins in standard classes at that grade, **at either Full height or the Lower Height Option**, except that progression from Grade 5 will require 3 wins at Grade 5, one of which must be an agility class. Progression from Grade 6 will require 4 wins at Grade 6, two of which must be agility classes. Results from Combined Classes will only count towards progression from the dog's current grade.

(Insertion in bold).

H(1)(A)10. Standard Classes (was previously H(1)(A)8.)

h. Championship Class. Open to dogs having qualified to compete in Grade 7 **which have had 4 wins at Full**

**Height in either Grade 6 or Grade 7, at least 2 of which must be gained in agility classes.** To consist of 2 qualifying rounds of Standard Kennel Club Classes, 1 Agility Class and 1 Jumping Class and a final round of Agility to be held at the same Show.

(Insertion in bold).

H(1)(B)1. **Courses.**

c. No practice is allowed on the course save that competitors will be allowed to walk the course set at the height the dog is to negotiate without their dog(s) before the class begins. **Hurdles will be raised / lowered during the course walking time if multiple heights are offered within the same class.**

(Insertion in bold).

H(1)(B)3. **Obstacles**

a. **Hurdle**-The height of the hurdle must be 650mm (2ft 1.6ins) **(550mm (1ft 9.6ins) for Lower Height Option)** for Large Dogs, 450mm (1ft 5.7ins) **(350mm (1ft 1.75ins) for Lower Height Option)** for Medium Dogs and 350mm (1ft 1.75ins) **(250mm (9.8ins) for Lower Height Option)** for Small Dogs. Width: 1.219m (4ft) minimum. The top bar or plank must be easily displaced by the dog. A wall should have displaceable units on the top. The height of hurdles in special classes may be lower than those listed above, but the height must be included in the schedule.

(Insertions in bold).

These regulations will not apply to Kennel Club 'prestige events', at which there is a high value to the awards offered. Kennel Club prestige events are those held at Premier Shows, including heats for Crufts, Olympia or Eukanuba Discover Dogs, such as Crufts Singles, Crufts ABC etc.

In addition, schedules must be updated to include the following statement:

Insert new Regulation H(10)c.(12) and renumber accordingly.

**Dog Agility is a competitive and physically strenuous activity. It is the responsibility of the owner / handler to ensure their dog is 'fit for function' and that they themselves are fit to take part. By signing the entry form you confirm that to the best of your knowledge your dog is fit and able to take part in Agility classes on the day of the show."**

(Insertion in bold).

**ENDS**

### **The Lower Height Option**

For some time now there has been a call for the introduction of an additional jump height of 55cm and creation of an additional dog height between the current Medium and Large, (This has been popularly referred to within the agility fraternity as the 4<sup>th</sup> height).

There has also been a request to consider a further height to be introduced below the current 35cm Small dog height as well. Considering these specific options raised the opportunity to address issues for ALL heights of dog.

Whilst considering this it is also imperative to retain the ability for show organisers to still have choice over what they schedule, and, that competitors still have choice of jump height they perceive to be suitable for their dog.

Therefore, with all of this in mind the Lower Height Option is to be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 which satisfies all the above.

#### **Lower Height Information**

Full Height Jump heights: Small – 35cm, Medium – 45cm, Large – 65cm

Lower Height Jump heights: Small – 25cm, Medium – 35cm, Large – 55cm

When the Lower Height Option is listed on the schedule a dog may only be entered at either the Full height or at the Lower Height and cannot compete at a different height in any class at that show.

The Lower Height option detailed here is only applicable to Standard Classes as it is already possible to reduce hurdle heights for Special classes within the current regulations.

## General

- Question:** Why has it been decided to do this now?  
**Answer:** In order to provide professional advice regarding the jump height debate, the Kennel Club has commissioned research to fully understand the impact of jump heights on dogs. However, this research is likely to take some considerable time before it is concluded and the findings made available to inform the debate.
- Question:** When will this become effective?  
**Answer:** This will become effective for any shows from 1 July 2016

## Show Organisers

- Question:** Can you give me an example of what a schedule will look like?  
**Answer:** The class listing on the show schedule will need to identify which classes will have the Lower Height Option available such as:  
  
Class 15 Large Agility Graded 3,4,5 \*  
Class 16 KC Olympia Large Novice Agility Stakes Combined 3-5  
Class 17 Small Agility Graded 3,4,5 \*  
Class 18 Special Small Steeplechase Combined 4-7 \*  
(\* with Lower Height Option)
- Question:** How will this be accommodated on the entry form? Will they have a box to tick that they will be entering all the lower height classes?  
**Answer:** Yes, there will be a tick box on the entry form to indicate which dogs are entered at the lower height.
- Question:** Will the class numbers be the same?  
**Answer:** Yes, it will be one class.
- Question:** Do shows have to schedule lower height options as small shows might find it hard to fit them in?  
**Answer:** No, we have tried to make it as flexible as possible for societies. There is no requirement to offer lower height classes.
- Question:** Can clubs run the lower height classes without offering the full height as well?  
**Answer:** No.
- Question:** Can clubs run a mixture of some lower height classes with full height classes? For example run full height large, medium and small classes, but only run the lower height class for medium and small, not large?  
**Answer:** Yes, as long as they are running the full height class, this won't be a problem.
- Question:** Can the club charge a different entry fee for the lower height classes and the full height ones?

**Answer:** No, all the dogs will be entered in the same class and the entry fee must be the same.

**10. Question:** What benefits are there for clubs running the lower height classes?

**Answer:** It is anticipated that entries will increase as dogs that have not previously been able to jump Kennel Club heights will now be able to compete. It is also expected that some dogs may be able to compete for longer in standard classes as they could be dropped to the Lower height instead of to veterans / any size classes.

**11. Question:** If lower height is offered for a class, do both winners of the full height and lower height count towards progression?

**Answer:** Only if the show organisers are offering separate awards for the two heights which must be detailed on the schedule.

### **Competitors**

**12. Question:** I have a small border collie that competes in Large, does it have to jump the lower height?

**Answer:** No, every class must have jumps at full height, even if the society is offering the lower height option. Therefore you can continue to compete your dog at 65cm.

**13. Question:** If even taller dogs can jump at the lower height, what's to stop everyone from running at the lower height to increase their speed?

**Answer:** This will come down to personal choice. Some handlers won't choose to change their dogs to the lower height as it will change their timing, stride pattern etc. Additionally it is often the taller, heavier dogs that will benefit more from not having to jump so high, so it is more likely to be these dogs you will find at the lower height. Finally, all the Kennel Club qualifiers will be held at the full height so there is an advantage to competing at the full height.

**14. Question:** Will it be easy for the running orders to be printed off to reflect those who are running the lower height class and those who aren't?

**Answer:** Yes, this will be done by the show processor in a similar way to how they are done for Any Size type classes.

**15. Question:** Can you enter lower height classes at some shows and then full height classes at others?

**Answer:** Yes. You can compete at either full height or lower height for the duration of the show covered by a specific schedule. Therefore if a show is over two weekends and during the week with different schedules it would be possible to compete in lower height for one weekend and then full height for the rest of the show if it's under a different schedule.

**16. Question:** Is the lower height just for hurdles? What about the other obstacles?

**Answer:** It is just for the hurdles (which includes the wall). All the other obstacles will remain at full height as detailed in the Regulations.

- 17. Question:** If a lower height class includes the tyre how will that work if it is higher than the hurdles?  
**Answer:** The measurement for the tyre is taken at the centre of the tyre. Therefore the dog could still jump the same height through the tyre as it is jumping over the hurdles.
- 18. Question:** What are Kennel Club Prestige Events?  
**Answer:** Kennel Club Prestige Events are those held at Premier Shows; these are heats for Crufts, Olympia, Discover Dogs, such as Crufts Singles, Crufts ABC etc
- 19. Question:** Why can't Prestige Events be at the lower height?  
**Answer:** There is a high value of the awards at these events, they have extra importance than standard classes and therefore a lower height is not applicable.
- 20. Question:** I don't understand what I have to do to qualify for Championship classes? Has it changed?  
**Answer:** If your wins from Grade 6 to Grade 7 were all at full height then you can automatically enter Championship classes. However if you have progressed to Grade 7 in the lower height then the qualification requirements have changed. If your wins to Grade 7 were at a lower height then you will need additional wins at full height. You will need a total of 4 wins at full height in either Grade 6 or 7, at least 2 of which must be agility.
- 21. Question:** Would my dog have to be measured to enter the lower height classes?  
**Answer:** The lower height classes are not separate classes so measuring is required as normal for dogs entered in to Small and Medium classes
- 22. Question:** If I have entered the lower height for a class and have missed my run and the jumps have been lowered/raised can I still run in the class?  
**Answer:** No, it is the competitors' responsibility to be at the ring when required. It is recommended that Shows indicate on their ring plan whether a class is starting with the lower height or full height.
- 23. Question:** If lower height is offered for a class, do both winners of the full height and lower height count towards progression?  
**Answer:** Only if the show organisers are offering separate awards for the two heights which must be detailed on the schedule.