

**MEETING WITH OBEDIENCE SHOW SECRETARIES**

**16 FEBRUARY 2016**

**PRESENT:**

Mr R Harlow (Chairman – Kennel Club Obedience Liaison Council)  
Mrs E Restell (North West Kent Dog Training Club)  
Mrs A Shaw (St Edwards Dog Training Club)  
Mrs H Troth (Culverstone Dog Training Club)  
Mrs J Wood (Good Citizen Dog Scheme Listed Status)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs D Deuchar – Manager, Canine Activities Department  
Miss S Mamouzi – Specialist, Working Dog Activities Team  
Mrs A Mitchell – Committee Secretary, Working Dog Activities Team

Mr Harlow welcomed those present and thanked them for attending.

Objectives of the meeting

1. To consider how to attract more competitors and dogs into competition obedience and how to retain existing competitors, and to suggest ways in which Registered and Listed Status clubs could be assisted to run events which would attract competitors. There was no formal agenda but those present were requested to submit and discuss any suggestions which may be beneficial to the discipline.

Possible introduction of ABC classes (up to Open C)

2. The meeting was requested to consider whether the introduction of ABC classes (up to Open C) would be a positive step to assist dogs other than Border Collies to progress through the classes.
3. The suggestion was made due to a perception that only Border Collies could be successful. It was accepted that there were a variety of reasons for this but that it would be desirable to identify ways in which the situation could be addressed.
4. By way of comparison, the introduction of the Lower Height Option (LHO) in Agility competitions was noted, whereby show societies may schedule LHO in most classes if they wished to do so. Competitors could choose whether to enter at full height or LHO. Show organisers were free to offer a single set of awards for all dogs competing in the class, or to offer two separate sets of awards for full height and LHO. Dogs may progress through the classes on the basis of awards gained at LHO, but would be required to compete at full height in order to become eligible to compete in Championship classes.
5. It was agreed that a similar model could be used in Obedience, with the possibility that options could be offered based on the height of the dog, which would offer encouragement for the many handlers competing with small dogs. As an example, a single class may include options for Border Collies, Large

ABC and Small ABC, with separate awards for each, thus offering opportunities for wins and therefore progression for a range of breed types and sizes.

6. It was noted that many small dogs, such as Toy breeds, competed in Obedience, and that it was highly desirable to offer them encouragement to continue to do so.
7. Logistical issues would be kept to a minimum as even where an ABC option was offered within a class, the same test would be used, in the same ring, and with the same judge. It was accepted that there would be a cost implication to clubs in terms of the cost of additional sets of rosettes and trophies. However, the meeting considered that the overall principle was a good one.
8. The meeting was of the view that it would be beneficial to encourage handlers in the lower classes in order to retain them within the discipline. It was anticipated that there would be support for the introduction of ABC classes from those currently competing in lower classes. Accordingly it was suggested that an ABC option, similar to the LHO option in Agility, could be introduced for all classes up to Open 'C'.
9. It was accepted that the issue would require further detailed consideration, but those present were of the view that the principle of ABC classes was a positive one and that it should be progressed further.

Possible introduction of a Novice Obedience Warrant

10. A further suggestion was the introduction of a points-based 'Novice Obedience Warrant' (NOW) to encourage those in earlier classes, with points being gained from competing at a wide range of shows including Limited Shows, Breed Club Limited Shows, and Open Shows. It was anticipated that this would encourage newer competitors to enter shows, particularly Limited Shows which were often perceived as being less daunting for inexperienced handlers than Open Shows. It would also provide a boost for entries at Limited Shows.
11. It was noted that a Junior Warrant (JW) award already existed for those competing in breed showing, and that a special competition for JW winners took place each year at Crufts. It was suggested that a similar competition could take place at Crufts for winners of the NOW award, and that it may also be possible for those awarded NOWs in one year to take part in special classes at shows held in the following year.
12. It was clarified that the NOW would be awarded to the dog and the handler as a team and it would be open to those eligible to compete at or below Novice level.
13. It may be possible to include provision within a points-based system for handlers to claim points for winning awards such as 'Best Gundog', 'Best Toy' etc. as this would also encourage handlers of non-collie breeds to compete. To reduce costs, handlers may be awarded qualifying certificates rather than rosettes, although it was acknowledged that rosettes were popular with competitors.

14. Many handlers already competed in Obedience classes scheduled at Breed Club Limited Shows, and were therefore familiar with the tests involved in competing at Open Shows, and it was hoped that the NOW may be a way of encouraging them to compete further.
15. The meeting agreed that the suggestion of a Novice Obedience Warrant was an excellent one and that it should be progressed further.

Wins at Limited Shows to count towards progression at Open Shows

16. The meeting discussed the issue of Limited Shows, noting that it would be desirable to encourage clubs to hold more such shows. It was hoped that the introduction of Listed Status clubs may help to increase the number of Limited Shows being offered, noting that these were particularly attractive to newer competitors who were often reluctant to travel long distances to attend shows.
17. It was confirmed that shows may be limited by a number of criteria such as by number, by breed, or by membership. If necessary, entries at Limited Shows may be capped, which would allow for such shows to take place at smaller venues where there was limited space available.
18. It was anticipated that attendance at Limited Shows, whether held by breed clubs, registered Obedience clubs, or Listed Status clubs, would be increased should wins or places at such shows count towards progression, or towards a NOW award as previously discussed.
19. The meeting was therefore of the view that it would be beneficial to the discipline if wins at Limited Shows counted towards progression at Open Shows and agreed that this issue should be progressed..
20. This led to a further suggestion that a points system be introduced as an alternative route for progression through the classes, using the same model as that applying in Agility whereby handlers could progress either on wins or, optionally, on points. Care would be necessary in determining the way in which points could be used towards progression as some handlers may prefer to progress only on the basis of wins.
21. It was agreed that any points system must be simple and clear and that details would require careful consideration. However, the meeting was of the view that the principle of a points system, which would form the basis of an optional method of progression, and with points available at a wide range of shows, was very positive and should be progressed.

Time frames for winning out

22. The meeting was in agreement that 'freebie' wins i.e. wins by those who had already qualified out of a class, were not helpful in allowing progression through the classes.
23. It was suggested that no change be made to the current system but that in the event of a win by a dog which had already qualified out of a class, the next placed dog would be considered to have achieved a qualifying award.

However it was acknowledged that this would not be popular with handlers who would wish to gain wins in order to progress.

24. Another suggestion was made whereby any wins gained in a 2-3 week period prior to a show would be counted for the purposes of class eligibility. Any handler achieving a class win within this time frame would be required to advise the show secretary who would move them into the appropriate class. A 2 week period prior to the show would allow adequate time for running orders to be prepared and sent out to competitors. There would be no necessity to make any amendment to closing dates which could still be 6-8 weeks prior to the show. It was noted that a similar system operated within Agility and worked well. Show secretaries were able to make use of 'ghost entries' in order to allow for freshly-qualified dogs to be allocated spaces within running orders, noting that agility classes had full running orders.. The meeting was of the view that such a system would be effective within Obedience and that the suggestion should be progressed.

#### Catalogues

25. The meeting discussed a suggestion that the necessity for the publication of catalogues should be removed, and be replaced with a sheet for each class which detailed the names of each dog, and its owner/s and handler. In some cases the printing of catalogues meant a substantial financial outlay for the club.
26. It was noted that there was no requirement within Agility for the provision of a catalogue, other than for Championship classes.
27. The meeting was in agreement that the necessity for clubs to provide catalogues should be removed and that this would be beneficial in terms of reducing costs.

#### Training rounds

28. There was some concern at the number of training rounds taking place within the first ten dogs within a running order. As a result there were often delays in judging as subsequent dogs did not arrive at the ring promptly and judges were kept waiting.
29. It was also noted that in some instances judges were having to hold classes open during the afternoon as they were awaiting competitors, who then wished to train rather than compete. It was suggested that anyone wishing to carry out a training round should be required to do so before noon as this would prevent this occurrence. However, it was accepted that some handlers wished to initially work a round but may then wish to switch to training during the round. The suggestion did have some merit but it was acknowledged that it would not be easy to put into practice and may be open to abuse. However, the meeting was of the view that the principle was a good one and that it should be progressed.

Running orders

30. It was noted that draws were very time consuming for show secretaries and it was agreed that it would be helpful if running orders could be reduced to 5 dogs which would considerably reduce the time involved in allocating running orders.

Draws for Championship classes

31. It was accepted that situations sometimes arose where a handler with more than one dog was drawn with his or her dogs in close succession. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to prevent this occurring and that the Council had recently discussed a suggestion to amend the way in which draws were carried out, in order to prevent such situations occurring, but had not supported it. It was accepted that the draw must be random in nature and must be seen to be fair. It would not be perceived as fair should handlers with more than one dog be given any kind of special treatment or advantage.

Progression into Championship Class 'C'

32. It was noted that a high number of Open 'C' classes had been won by a small number of competitors in 2015 which was perceived as preventing some handlers from progressing into Championship Class 'C'. There was a concern that some handlers did not enter Open 'C' classes due to a perception that the class would be won by a dominant handler.
33. The current system for progression had been introduced in order to reduce the number of dogs competing in Championship 'C', however there were no longer high numbers of dogs competing in this class. Accordingly, it was suggested that the old system be reverted to, whereby qualification into Championship Class 'C' was achieved by completion of Open 'C' tests with a loss of 10 points or less on three occasions.
34. An alternative suggestion to allow progression into Championship 'C' was that a dog having won an Obedience Certificate would no longer be eligible to compete in Open 'C'. This was considered to be a strong measure but would be effective in allowing more opportunities for other dogs to progress. However there was some concern that this would result in reduced entries into Open 'C' classes.
35. It was noted that currently 46 Obedience Certificates were available per calendar year.

Tests

36. The meeting considered whether there was any necessity for the tests themselves to be changed, noting that at present there was a great deal of variation in the length and difficulty of tests set by judges. For example, some Pre-Beginner rounds contained more heelwork than some Novice rounds. However, it was accepted that this was an issue which would be best addressed by judges training.

#### Judges Training

37. There was a concern that in some training clubs, there was a negative attitude towards competition obedience. It was agreed that if possible this should be addressed, and that all handlers should be encouraged to compete and be given the confidence to do so. The role of judges and stewards officiating in the early classes was also acknowledged as being crucial, and it was hoped that judges training could address this and promote a positive attitude towards new handlers.

#### Breed Shows

38. It was hoped that Open and Championship breed shows would be encouraged to host obedience shows which would greatly assist organisers, as many of the arrangements such as venue, refreshments and other infrastructure would be made by the host club.

#### Companion Shows

39. It was also suggested that Companion Shows should be encouraged as these were an excellent way of attracting newcomers into the discipline.

#### Administration issues

40. Those present were requested to consider what assistance the Kennel Club could offer to assist clubs.

#### **Correspondence involved in appointment of judges**

41. It was accepted that the appointment of judges involved a significant amount of paperwork. It was clarified that all correspondence could be conducted via email which would save on postal costs. It was not necessary to have a contract containing a physical signature as an email from the judge was considered to be fully acceptable. However, it was essential that a three-part contract should be in place for every appointment. The Activities Sub-Committee was not in a position to consider complaints against judges who had failed to fulfil appointments unless there was clear evidence that the judge had been aware of the contract.

#### **Licence Applications**

42. It was also hoped that in future the Kennel Club would be in a position to process licence applications on line which would also be helpful for clubs.

#### **Submission of results**

43. It was accepted that it would continue to be necessary for clubs to submit details of the results of Championship classes to the Kennel Club.

#### **Training for show organisers**

44. A query was raised as to whether there were seminars available to help show organisers. It was confirmed that such seminars were available although historically the take-up had not been good. However, it was hoped that this would improve as more clubs gained Listed Status.

45. A Manual for Registered Societies was available for breed show secretaries and it was hoped that a similar document would be introduced for other disciplines.

**Fees**

46. It had been agreed by the Kennel Club that fees for Listed Status clubs would be reduced to £15 enrolment fee and £15 annual renewal fee, if they were already listed for another activity or for the Good Citizen Dog Scheme.

Survey

47. It was suggested that the Kennel Club's Marketing Department issue a questionnaire via Survey Monkey in order to gather data from existing clubs such as what training they offered, classes, shows, breeds, numbers etc.
48. Those present were thanked by the Chairman for a very positive discussion and for the many constructive suggestions which had been put forward, which would, in due course, be subject to consideration by the Obedience Liaison Council.
49. The meeting closed at 12.40.