



**CHIEF OBEDIENCE
STEWARDS GUIDANCE**

*This guidance is prepared by
The Kennel Club Accredited Judges Trainers – Obedience October 2021*

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The Chief Obedience Steward

This document is updated to align with The Kennel Club year book dated 2021/2022.

A number of questions comes to mind:

1. Why have a Chief Obedience Steward?
2. What do they do?
3. Can anyone do it?
4. How can you deal with the problems?

Well, let's see if we can answer the questions.

Why have a Chief Obedience Steward?

Way back in the late 1980's early 1990's, The Kennel Club (KC) introduced the role to help show societies reduce problems at shows and having a single point of contact and decision making in relation to issues that arose on the day of the show.

In fact, Kennel Club Regulations annex E, regulation 2a requires a show society to appoint an individual and be named in the schedule.

What do they do?

Again, annex E of The Kennel Club G regulations gives a brief overview of their responsibilities.

Their main responsibility is encompassed within this annex G(E)1.b. To paraphrase, they are to be responsible at all times to ensure that competitors and judges abide by Kennel Club rules and G regulations for the duration of the show.

So, from this brief description, it can be a very onerous position to carry out in order to fully comply with this regulation.

The most common issues that the Chief Obedience Steward must deal with include:

- a. Running order issues
- b. Dealing with interpretation of the rules

- c. Dog bite(s), whether they be dog to dog or dog to person
- d. Missing entries

It must be noted that the Chief Obedience Steward is not allowed to carry out any other function at a show e.g., act as table steward, scribe, scent decoy etc. Kennel Club regulation G(E)2. a

Can anyone do it?

When the role was first introduced, there were no stipulations on who could carry out that role. However, over the years rules were introduced as to minimum qualifications to fulfil this role bearing in mind that the Chief Obedience Steward has the authority to over-rule or require judges to comply with Kennel Club rules and G regulations.

These minimum qualifications are encompassed within annex E of the G regulations

Basically, there are three requirements, which are as follows:

- a. G(E)1. a – Have eight years of competitive obedience experience
- b. G(E)1. a - Have a sound knowledge of The Kennel Club rules and G regulations
- c. G(E)1. a – Must be familiar with The Kennel Club complaints procedure

The above only specifies The Kennel Club mandatory requirements, however the softer requirements could include a number of personal attributes to be considered, such as:

- a. Good listening skills
- b. Good personal skills
- c. Not easily influenced or browbeaten
- d. Patience when dealing with disturbed or irate people
- e. Good communication skills
- f. Ability to make decisions based upon the information available and the requirements of The Kennel Club G regulations and associated annexes

So, from the above, not everyone may be suited for the job.

How can you deal with the problems?

When dealing with the show's problems, the following could be considered as a way forward:

- a. Listen to the person(s) advising you of a potential or actual issue
- b. Assimilate the facts by establishing:
 - i. what the issue is
 - ii. does it breach Kennel Club regulations?
- c. If there is a breach, who is involved/responsible?
- d. Is it within the remit of the Chief Obedience Steward to deal with it?
- e. Decide how best to try and put the breach right
- f. Record the details of the incident/breach and actions taken in the shows Kennel Club incident book

It seems quite straightforward to deal with on-the-day show issues. Though not always.

How do I deal with non-prescribed emergencies/issues?

Some typical emergencies that crop up could include:

- a. Dog bites
- b. Medical emergencies
- c. Dealing with the general public
- d. Adverse weather before the show starts
- e. Adverse weather during the show
- f. Judge is unable to complete a judging appointment

Where there is no guidance given within The Kennel Club regulations then a "common sense" approach shall be taken

Dog bites

The Kennel Club takes these particular incidents very seriously because of the potential ramifications of legal liability claims; irrespective of whether it is dog to dog or dog to human.

When the incident is notified to you, it is essential that the injured party receives appropriate and proportionate veterinary and or medical treatment in the first instance.

Secondly, ensure that the offending dog is sufficiently/proportionately restrained with a view to having the dog removed from the show in accordance with Kennel Club regulation G. 9. Remember that this is an extreme event and should be carried out in consultation with the show management.

Thirdly, it will be necessary to establish the issues (what, who and when) and record these in the shows Kennel Club incident book. Irrespective of what the parties to the incident want, the details must be recorded because of the possibility of legal claims after the event.

Medical/veterinary emergencies

The first priority is that a proportionate and quick response is made to either of these emergencies. It is **not** specifically for you as Chief Obedience Steward to deal with them.

Once notified, ensure that the relevant treatment is given/advised. The show society should have an appointed first aider and veterinary practice and the details are on display.

If necessary, appropriate NHS medical resources can be called upon whether it be NHS Direct, ambulance services, or otherwise.

Finally ensure that the incident is recorded in the shows Kennel Club incident book

Veterinary incidents could include dogs shut in hot cars. When dealing with this issue, it is essential that the welfare of the dog(s) is paramount. Try to establish ownership of the vehicle and put out PA announcements warning of the situation and the actions that will be taken should there be no response.

If veterinary/police presence is on site, then get them involved and let them make the decision as to the final actions to be taken. For your own protection ensure that there are enough credible witnesses to this distressing situation before final action of breaking into the car is carried out.

When taking remedial action, then try to ensure minimal damage whilst gaining access to the vehicle. Remember the dog(s) are in distress from the effects of heat and that strangers are breaking into their space.

Dealing with the general public

Issues relating to the general public and incidents at shows can sometimes be quite delicate, particularly if the venue is a public space.

When an incident is reported, investigate the issue in a calm but thorough manner and if the member of public is an offender, then deal with it in a sensitive and proportionate manner.

Do not try to “man-handle” anyone, as this could be construed as a possible cause for a breach of the peace. Calmly try to de-escalate the situation. If you consider any person or animal is at risk or in danger, then the relevant authorities must be notified immediately. If the offender is a competitor, treat in a similar manner.

In all cases ensure that the incident is recorded in the shows Kennel Club incident book.

Adverse weather before show starts

In all instances of adverse weather, the first consideration must be given to the safety of all persons and dogs attending the event. If the conditions at the showground are such, then in conjunction with the show management the cancellation of the show should be discussed on the grounds of health and safety

In all cases ensure that the incident is recorded in the shows Kennel Club incident book.

Adverse weather during the show

Kennel Club regulation G(E)2.b “in the event of extreme adverse weather conditions at a show, a judge may alter exercises as deemed appropriate at the time and must always obtain the full agreement of the Chief Steward unless in an emergency situation. The Chief Steward must be advised of the changes and the reasons for them at the earliest opportunity. Any alteration to

exercises must be reported by the show management to The Kennel Club within 14 days of the date of the show”.

Have knowledge of The Kennel Clubs’ cancellation procedure.

The Chief Obedience Steward should review all changes to exercises at the time a decision needs to be made. E.g. If there is a need to change fast pace because of exceptionally poor ground conditions

Judge is unable to complete a judging appointment

Kennel Club regulation G(E)2.c “should a judge be prevented from completing a class which has commenced, the Chief Steward shall decide what action is to be taken,”

This is a particularly awkward situation to deal with as a number of solutions are available:

- a. Cancel the class, and subsequently, entry fees for the class are refunded upon request
- b. Suspend the class and restart later, allowing those that competed under the original judge to work again
- c. Suspend the class and cancel later and subsequently entry fees for the class are refunded upon request
- d. Provide a substitute judge
 - i. Restart the class by considering those that have worked being in part 1 and prizes issued as though the class had been completed and those still to work could be part 2 and prizes issued as normal. This would only be a suitable solution if the balance between those that have worked and those still to be worked are similar
 - ii. Continue as though the class had already started
 - iii. If only scent is remaining, then the class could be completed by a replacement judge with no detriment to the competitors

It is essential that you take the following issues into consideration before arriving at your final decision:

- a. Is your decision practicable/equitable?

- b. How many dogs have competed?
- c. How many dogs remain to compete?
- d. Can a substitute judge be appointed?
- e. What are the financial and logistical ramifications of cancelling/suspending the class?
- f. Is there enough time to complete the class?

What equipment do I need for the job?

There is no specific requirement for the Chief Obedience Steward to provide any equipment, however, it may be useful for you to have some or all of the following:

- a. Judging sheets/blank paper
- b. Clipboard
- c. Retrieve articles
- d. Scent cloths
- e. Stopwatch
- f. Industrial thermometer

SPECIFIC REGULATIONS NAMING THE CHIEF OBEDIENCE STEWARD

Kennel Club regulation G.9 – removal of dogs

“Following discussion with the Chief Steward the show management and/or a veterinary surgeon, a dog shall be prevented from competing and/or removed from the show if it is:

- a. A bitch which is in season
- b. Suffering from any infectious or contagious disease
- c. Interfering with the safety or chance of winning of an opponent
- d. Of such temperament or is so much out of control as to be a danger to the safety of any person or animal
- e. Likely to cause suffering to the dog if it continues competing

The circumstances of such a removal shall be recorded in the show incident book and submitted to The Kennel Club.”

Very little comment needs to be made on this regulation. However, it is suggested that any removal under this regulation should be corroborated by relevant specialists or other witnesses.

Kennel Club regulation G.23.i - incorrect class, notifying Chief Steward

“The Judge of the class in which a dog has been incorrectly exhibited must advise the Chief Steward as soon as possible of the incident.”

“The Chief Steward shall upon notification, advise the Judge(s) in the other relevant class(es) that the dog is ineligible to work in that class.”

Kennel Club regulation G.34.c - dogs allowed in the ring

“No dog shall be allowed in the judging ring other than those competing in the class being judged.”

Let’s consider the following scenario’s:

Scenario 1 – Competitor number 264 has entered beginners and novice at the show and inadvertently works this dog in class A. The class A judge should advise the Chief Obedience Steward of the issue. The Chief Obedience Steward then checks the relevant entry form and catalogue to determine the facts. It is determined that the competitor is in error, then the Chief Obedience Steward must advise the beginner judge that Exhibit 264 cannot work in their class because of this breach of regulation.

Scenario 2 – Competitor number 264 was entered in novice part 2 at the show, and inadvertently works this dog in novice part 1. The novice part 1 judge should advise the Chief Obedience Steward of the issue. The Chief Obedience Steward then checks the relevant entry form and catalogue to determine the facts. It is determined that the competitor is in error, then the Chief Obedience Steward must advise the novice part 2 judge that Exhibit 264 cannot work in their class because of this breach of regulation.

However, you may need to consider when dogs have to be transferred to other classes on the day of the show, for legitimate reasons.

Kennel Club regulation G.26.a – catalogue

“On the front outside cover or page..... and the name of the Chief Steward.”

This is needed so that judges and competitors alike know who to refer problems too.

Kennel Club regulation G. 29.f.6 – running orders to be observed strictly

“All published running orders must be strictly observed. Competitors arriving late will be excluded from competition unless they have previously reported to the Chief Steward that they are actually working a dog in championship class C.”

In practice, this requirement is generally dealt with retrospectively or sometimes it is dealt with “locally” by the judge or scoreboard steward.

If dealt with in accordance with the strict requirements of the rule, those judges/stewards/competitors are in breach of this regulation, and as such a breach must be recorded in the show’s Kennel Club incident book.

In relation to this regulation, the Chief Obedience Steward should note Kennel Club regulation G32.h “the judging of championship class C takes priority over all classes.

Kennel Club regulation G. 29.f.7 – relaxation of running orders

“The Chief Steward may in exceptional circumstances relax the running order. All such decisions must be recorded in the shows Kennel Club incident book.”

This particular regulation does not specify what constitutes an “exceptional circumstance”. It is suggested that it could include incidents that are out of the control of the competitor concerned, such as traffic delays, vehicle breakdown, medical/veterinary emergencies, extreme/adverse weather conditions.

Particular care must be taken when validating the reasons and the frequency of such events, that is, if an individual is known to regularly claim these incidents. That is why it is important to record the incident and The Kennel Club may pick up on such repetitions by the same people.

Just remember that this regulation says “**may**”, so you do not have to allow the competitor to work. In relation to this regulation, the Chief Obedience Steward should note Kennel Club regulation G32.h “the judging of championship class C takes priority over all classes.” This rule sets an exceptional circumstance which allows for the relaxation of a running order.

When sorting out these issues, it is advisable to consult with the judge for their opinion.

Kennel Club regulation G.32.n – judges and judging

“Judges should be aware of the responsibilities of Chief Stewards as outlined in regulation G annex E”

Annex E of the G regulations outlines the duties and responsibilities attributed to the Chief Obedience Steward over and above those specified in the G regulations. These requirements will be dealt with separately.

Kennel Club regulation G45 – instructions as to the duties of Obedience Chief Stewards

“The instructions as to the duties of Obedience Chief Stewards are given in annex E”

This regulation amplifies the duties alluded to in the non-annex parts of the G regulations

Kennel Club regulation G(E)1.b – ensure competitors and judges abide by regulations

“A Chief Stewards’ responsibilities are to at all times ensure that competitors and judges abide by The Kennel Club rules and regulations”

Whilst it is not implicitly required for a Chief Obedience Steward to look for problems, they still have a duty to deal with such issues.

When such an incident is reported then follow the guidance given in section “How can you deal with the problems?”

The Chief Obedience Steward should be proactive in the carrying out of their duties, which are set out in annex E. Ideally “patrolling” the rings ensuring judges are ok etc., and being available to all concerned.

When a complaint/comment is made about a breach of regulations then talk to the parties independently of each other so as not to embarrass anyone and then arrive at your decision and record it in the shows Kennel Club incident book.

Kennel Club regulation G(E)1.e – supports the show management

“A Chief Steward supports the show management in the smooth running of the show”

More often than not, the Chief Obedience Steward is the first person on call. Remember that you are there to **support**, not to carry the burden of all the show issues unless specifically mandated to under The Kennel Club regulations.

References

Kennel Club rules and regulations – Section G

Guide to Obedience judges and stewards