



## The Agility Council

Sirs

Please find a proposal for your consideration.

During the Covid enforced Lockdown and subsequent stop on KC Events I have given a great deal of thought to an issue which in my opinion is currently adversely affecting Agility Competitions for a certain demographic of competitors.

I have been an Agility Competitor for over 20 years, starting when I was in my mid to late 40's

When I started competing and up to about 5 years ago, Agility was always a very inclusive and enjoyable sport, with all sorts of people and dogs participating. Competitors ranged from the little old ladies with their little fluffy dogs to the top competitors with their super-fast collies and all in between. However, of late it would appear that unless you are young, very fit and run a very fast dog you have little chance of even limited success and our sport has become more exclusive and dare I say it discriminatory.

The days when an experienced Handler could achieve success in a "Handling" type course seem long gone and from personal observation, many of the newer handlers do not appear to be able to do justice to a "handling" course.

Whereas there were many people of my age group competing, in the last year or two it has been very noticeable at the shows I have attended, that many of these people have disappeared from the scene. Accepting that some will have retired on age, physical fitness or cost grounds, there appear to be far fewer older people now competing and I suspect that the growing trend of exclusivity in Agility is part of the reason for this.

Having spoken to some of those who remain there is an overwhelming sentiment that people have dropped by the wayside as they can no longer achieve the course times imposed by the Length/Time tables, which Judges are expected to adhere to and are also unhappy with the growing trend towards the less technical, flat out style of course now being set. This in turn means we rarely achieve the satisfaction of even the odd Clear Round, which, in its turn is quite demoralising and I feel has led to many no longer competing. There also appears to be a growing groundswell of opinion that separate competitions for the more Senior competitor might be a solution. Personally, whilst I think this might offer a solution, my belief is that it would tend to compartmentalise the sport since such an event would inevitably have to be classified as a Special Event and it would be difficult to persuade organisers to schedule such an event into their Shows.

Whilst completely understanding the changes which have been implemented in recent years, lowering of Jump heights, Approved Judges, Course Time tabulation etc, are intended to improve the standards of competition and welfare of our dogs, I feel however that some of the measures instigated have, unintentionally, achieved the opposite effect by making our sport less inclusive.

Having discussed my thoughts with a respected former West Country Judge, I would put forward the 3 following suggestions.

The first suggestion is that the current Course Time Tables be adhered to but the Judges are given more latitude to add time above whatever the table indicates. This will not alter the result of any event since the fastest Clear dog and handler will always win. The only downside to this simplistic solution being that it could be seen to be dropping standards since placings could be gained with slower times.



The second suggestion would be to set dual times set for each course, the lower time being set using the current time schedule, and being a “Qualifying” time with results being eligible for progression and those between the lower and upper time being for Clear Rounds only. This would I suspect might be difficult to work with although the computerised results in UKA events do give a Non Qualifying placing for dogs placed with faults.

The third suggestion would be to instigate a Veteran Handlers element within each of the Grades and heights in the current Grading System – the computerised results system appears to be very capable of producing Graded results for combined Grade events so I suspect adding an additional element into the system should not be too difficult. This would remove the need to run extra events for such a Grade (Although it would be necessary to add some extra course time to each event however to accommodate us senior citizens!!) This particular suggestion might also be applied to Junior Handlers since their specific Events seem few and far between.

Any one of these suggestions I believe would help to address the issue of retention of the older competitor like myself but the third I believe would be appear to be more compatible with the aims of the Kennel Club and the Agility Council.

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A Private Individual.