



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2023 AT 10.30 AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT

Ms J Bale	South East / East Anglia
Mrs E Bostock	South East / East Anglia
Mr A Dornford-Smith	Northern Ireland
Mr N Ellis	Midlands
Mrs J Gardner	Midlands
Mr J Hallam	South / South West
Mr M Hallam	North West
Mrs S Hawkswell	Scotland
Mrs S Robinson	Wales
Miss R Sargent	North West
Mr M Tait	South / South West

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Head of Canine Activities
Miss C McHardy	Manager - Education, Training, and Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Bastick	Committee Secretary - Working Dog Activities Team
Miss R Mansfield	Senior Officer – Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Mitchell	Senior Committee Secretary - Working Dog Activities Team

NOTE: any recommendations made by the Agility Liaison Council are subject to review by the Activities Committee and The Kennel Club Board and will not come into effect unless and until Board approval has been confirmed.

IN THE CHAIR MR M HALLAM

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies were received from Mrs E Laing-Kay. Mr K Smith was not present.

ITEM 2. KENNEL CLUB RESEARCH PROJECT

2. It had been planned that the Council would receive a presentation from Mr M Bermingham (Interim Strategy & Implementation Executive) and Ms L Smith (Customer & Competitors Strategy Development Project Manager) which would provide an update on the research project into 'Organisers and Participants of Dog Activities'.
3. However, as there had been a delay to the Kennel Club Research Project, no findings were currently available to share. Accordingly, the presentation would be postponed until the Council's July meeting.
4. In the meantime, the Council noted a short briefing note which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The Council noted that the Board, at its meetings on 13 September 2022 and 22 November 2022, approved the following amendments to H Regulations:

Regulation H.9(15)

TO:

A statement that no bitch in season is allowed to compete **at Limited, Open, Premier or Championship Agility Shows. However, bitches in season can compete at quarter finals, semi-finals and finals of Kennel Club Prestige Events, except in events held under YKC rules.**

(Insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2023)

Regulation H.13 Removal of dogs from competition

TO:

a. A bitch which is in season **(apart from a dog competing in quarter finals, semi-finals and finals of Kennel Club Prestige Events other than events held under YKC rules).**

(Insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2023)

7. **Note:** At its meeting on 13 September 2022, following recommendations by the Council and the Activities Committee, the Board approved amendments to Regulations H.9(15) and H.13 which would allow for bitches in season to compete at prestige events. Subsequently, further discussions took place with the

YKC team, and it was agreed that additional amendments were necessary to address concerns that it would not be safe for bitches in season to compete in YKC agility events at Crufts, as a young handler may struggle to control their dog. The additional wording was agreed by the chair and vice chair of the Activities Committee, and the agility representatives on the Committee, and was approved by the Board at its meeting on 22 November 2022.

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)12.c

8. The Activities Committee, at its meeting on 12 July 2022, considered the Council's recommendation of the following amendment:

Regulation H(1)(A)12.c.

TO:

The capping level must be set at a minimum of ~~250~~ **50** entries received. There is no maximum level at which a cap may be set. Capped classes may be split into two or more parts in accordance with Regulation H(1)9.f.

(Deletion struck through. Insertions in bold)

9. It noted the Council's reasons for the recommendation, however it raised a query as to whether the regulation should relate only to indoor venues in order to restrict the effect the amendment would have on progression through classes. It also noted that a grading and progression review had only just been completed and this amendment would affect the impact of those changes. There was a suggestion that in order to combat the impact, that shows wishing to set a capping level would only be able to offer combined classes.
10. The Committee wished to refer the proposal back to the Council for further discussion, taking into account the suggestion that it should only apply to indoor shows, and for it to reconsider the capping level.
11. **NOTE:** a proposal had been submitted by the Governance Panel. Accordingly, the Council reconsidered the proposal later in the meeting (paragraphs 45-51 refer).

Proposed amendment to Regulation H.15

12. The following proposal was unanimously **recommended** for approval by the Council at its meeting held on 9 June 2022 but was omitted in error from the relevant Activities Committee agenda. The Council noted that it would be referred to the Board at its meeting on 14 February 2023:
13. The Council noted the above as well as a slight amendment to the wording: "Any unauthorised movement of equipment may result in removal of the competitor from the competition/show."
(Amendment underlined)

New Regulation H.14

TO:

No equipment shall be moved without permission of the judge. Any concerns regarding the course shall be discussed with the judge/show

management. Any unauthorised movement of equipment may result in removal of the competitor from the competition/show. All such removals should be reported to The Kennel Club in the Incident Book.

(Insertion in bold)

14. The Council also agreed with the office's recommendation to re-number this regulation as H.14.

ITEM 5. MEMBERSHIP OF PANELS

15. The Council noted the following:

Mr J Hallam had joined both the Judging Panel and the Governance Panel.

Mrs S Robinson had joined the Governance Panel.

Due to Mr Smith's ill-health, Mr Tait had agreed to join the Equipment Panel, and Mr Ellis would become interim chair of the group.

ITEM 6. ACCREDITED TRAINERS' ANNUAL SEMINAR

16. The Council noted a written report from Mr Jolly following the above seminar which took place on 13 October 2022.

Dress Code

17. The Council noted that the issue of appropriate dress for judges had been briefly discussed by the Accredited Trainers, and concern was expressed that judges did not have clear guidance as to what was deemed appropriate attire when officiating at events.
 18. It was considered important for judges to be easily identifiable at events. The Code of Best Practice for judges states, 1.16 "Dress in a conventional and acceptable fashion precluding them from being the centre of attention..." It was acknowledged that judges needed to be comfortable and dressed appropriately for weather conditions but should still stand out as the judge.
 19. The Council considered that judges should be directed to the Code of Best Practice and through education be given guidance on what was appropriate to wear and to possibly review the wording to ensure clarity. This would be addressed in the updated document.
- ##### The Code of Best Practice for Agility Judges
20. Further to the above, a lengthy discussion took place in respect of the Code of Best Practice for Agility Judges document which was submitted to the Kennel Club in 2022. Frustration was expressed regarding the length of time it was taking to finalise the document.
 21. The office explained that this was a complicated document which would take a substantial amount of time to review and format in accordance with The

Kennel Club requirements. However, the document had been forwarded to the Activities Judges Sub-Group for its input. There was some concern regarding the length and complexity of the 60-page document and whether judges would read it, and whether it would therefore fulfil its objectives.

22. The Council accepted that the document was long but considered that judges would read it. It was noted that the document was now out of date and a revised 2023 document would be prepared and forwarded to the office. The Council requested that the office expedite this document as a matter of urgency once received. The Chairman thanked the office for the work completed so far.

Tunnel under A-Frame/Dog Walk

23. A query was raised regarding the tunnel under the A-Frame/Dog Walk and whether it was considered a refusal or an elimination if a dog missed the tunnel entrance and ran under the contact equipment.
24. After discussion it was considered that in most circumstances the dog would run under the contact along the line of the tunnel and thereby clearly incur a refusal. There are some situations where the tunnel is the next obstacle but the dog is not actually attempting to enter the tunnel and passes under the relevant contact but not alongside the tunnel. This would incur an elimination.

ITEM 7. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

25. The Council noted a written report from Mr Tait following the Sub-Group's meeting on 15 September 2022.
26. Mr Tait agreed to submit a further update of its research after the next meeting of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group to be held on 17 April 2023.

ITEM 8. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL

27. The Council noted a written report from the Equipment Panel.
- Electronic Contacts
28. An initial plan had been drafted about how the pilot research study would take place and individuals with the capacity to facilitate this had been contacted to continue discussions.
 29. It was hoped that further information would be available at the Council's meeting in July 2023.
- Review of current equipment
30. The Panel continued to work with The Kennel Club reviewing any equipment where there was any concern that it did not meet the current specifications or was not 'fit-for-purpose'. There were some reviews that still required follow up and more information would be reported to the next meeting in July.

31. More research would be undertaken addressing issues with manufacturers and it was agreed for the members of the Equipment Panel to meet and discuss issues where equipment was no longer considered 'fit-for-purpose'.
32. The office was requested to send any reported incidents to them to assist with identifying any equipment which was raising concerns.
33. A query was raised regarding any time frame being in place once an issue had been reported with The Kennel Club in respect of a piece of equipment. The office confirmed that an instruction would be given for that equipment not to be used until the issue had been researched and if necessary, corrected.

ITEM 9. REPORT FROM THE AGILITY GOVERNANCE PANEL

34. The Council considered a report from the Agility Governance Panel and discussed issues arising from the report.

Competition Manager's role

35. Following discussions at the Council's two previous meetings, it considered proposed amendments to regulations. In particular, it discussed the role of Competition Managers and the requirement for them to complete the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination.

Regulation H(1)9.c.

TO:

The person appointed as Competition Manager should be aware of their responsibilities as laid out in Annex H(1)(E) of these regulations and should meet the criteria for this role.

(Insertion in bold)

(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

New regulation H(1)(E)

TO:

INSTRUCTIONS AS TO THE DUTIES OF AGILITY COMPETITION MANAGERS

1. Experiences and Qualifications

- a. **The Competition Manager should have a sound knowledge of the Kennel Club Rules and H Regulations, and a familiarity with the Kennel Club complaints procedure.**
- b. **The Competition Manager must have completed and passed an agility judges examination on the Kennel Club Academy within the last five years.**
- c. **The Competition Manager must have attended an Agility Competition Manager's online seminar within the last five years.**

2. Responsibilities .

- a. **A Competition Manager's responsibilities are to at all times ensure that competitors and judges abide by the Kennel Club Rules and H Regulations.**

- b. **A Competition Manager acts as decision maker in all matters relating to the Kennel Club Rules and H Regulations for the duration of the show.**
- c. **A Competition Manager must fully document all decisions and actions taken in relation to the H Regulations in the show's Kennel Club incident book.**
- d. **A Competition Manager supports the show management team in the smooth running of the show.**

3. Duties.

- a. **The show committee shall appoint a Competition Manager whose name must be announced in the schedule, and who must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their ownership or part ownership or work a dog or act in any other capacity at the show.**
- b. **In the event of extreme adverse conditions at a show a judge may remove mandatory equipment from a class as deemed appropriate at the time but must always obtain full agreement of the Competition Manager, unless in an emergency situation. The Competition Manager must be advised of the change and the reasons for it at the earliest opportunity. Any alterations must be recorded in the Incident Book and be reported, by the show management, to the Kennel Club within 14 days of the date of the show.**
- c. **Should a judge be prevented from completing a class which has already started, the Competition Manager shall decide what action is to be taken. Guidance is covered in the Guidance for Agility Judges and Stewards.**
- d. **The Competition Manager and the show management must act to remove a dog from the show under the conditions of Regulation H13.**
- e. **If there are any concerns over the suitability of a course the Competition Manager must consult with the relevant judge, and if available Accredited Trainers, and agree the proposed course of action**
- f. **Any complaints or matters arising at the show should be referred, in the first instance to the Competition Manager, who may consult with other members of the show team before taking appropriate action. All incidents, even if they are resolved on the day of the show, must be recorded in the Incident Book and be reported, by the show management, to the Kennel Club within 14 days of the date of the show.**

(Insertions in bold)

- 36. There was some confusion as to whether, under the terms of the proposal, Competition Managers would be required to attend the 2-day Kennel Club Agility Judges Seminar and to have passed the assessment, but it was confirmed that this was not the case, and that they would only be required to have passed the Regulations and Judges Procedure examination.
- 37. A query arose concerning the recording of those who had completed the H Regulations examination and if the office maintained a list of those who had done so. The office confirmed that a list was not available to the public

38. The matter of the organising team (show committee), collectively being responsible in undertaking the duties of a Competition Manager was discussed. There had been some support for running the event with collective responsibility rather than placing the responsibility on one person, however, the committee would still be able to nominate one person to be responsible for overseeing the management of the team.
39. There had been some confusion during consultation about the term Competition Manager. The Competition Manager is the official term for the designated person with overall responsibility for the show, sometimes this has been referred to as a Show Manager. It was agreed that often the judge, Competition Manager and the show committee would make decisions together. However, it was highlighted that in the case of some shows, the committee may not have the broad range of experience needed and the Competition Manager was critical in this case. It was also noted that in the case of Listed Status Clubs there is normally no committee.
40. The Council also noted that to be a Competition Manager would mean that person would not be able to run their dog/s in the competition and it was believed this could put people off becoming a Competition Manager.
41. It was also pointed out that there was no mention of health and safety in the Competition Managers guide.
42. In respect of 1(c) of the proposed new regulation which stated: 'The Competition Manager must have attended an Agility Competition Manager's online seminar within the last five years' the office enquired if it was intended for the seminar to be a live seminar or a film. The office explained that there would be no budget for a film, at least until 2025. There was also a concern that certificates of attendance were not provided for those having viewed a film, which may cause difficulties in policing such a requirement.
43. The Kennel Club was also compiling an online manual for registered societies covering dog show management and dog clubs in the next two years which may cover Competition Managers.
44. There was general consensus by the Council on the above issues. Accordingly, the Council requested that the Governance Panel be requested to review the proposal, taking into account what had been discussed at this meeting and prepare an amended proposal for consideration at the next meeting.

Capping of classes

45. As requested by the Activities Committee the Council considered a proposal submitted by the Panel and seconded by Mr Tait. (paragraph 11 refers)

Regulation H(1)(A)12.c.

TO:

The capping level must be set at a minimum of **50 entries for classes with just one grade of dogs, 100 entries for classes with 2 grades of dogs,**

and ~~250~~ 150 entries for all other classes. There is no maximum level at which a cap may be set. Capped classes may be split into two or more parts in accordance with Regulation H(1)9.f.

(Deletion struck through. Insertions in bold)

46. The main purpose of this regulation change was to enable clubs to put on shows at smaller venues, particularly indoor venues during winter months. The counter argument was that these classes should be open to all and not have restrictions placed on them that might unduly affect the standard of competition.
47. In many instances, shows already held classes with fewer than 50 dogs at uncapped open shows. Show organisers generally controlled numbers at shows by managing the number of classes they scheduled. However, there was always a risk that classes would be larger than anticipated and show organisers would have no way of ensuring that they did not exceed the capacity of the venue.
48. After discussing what was considered a suitable cap for different events, it was concluded that this proposal would not work for what was intended and in fact would not help indoor venues.
49. The Council also looked at the matter from a different perspective, i.e. that of venues, where they would lose funds if the cap was too low and venue owners would not accept bookings where it was considered financially unviable for them. It was recommended that further research be undertaken by speaking to the venue owners and for the Panel to come back with more information. Mr Ellis stated that he had some research and statistical information available which would be shared with the rest of the Panel.
50. The Council also noted that the lower the cap the faster the progression and low numbers meant there was not enough competition.
51. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting and for the Panel to forward suitable wording for the next meeting.

Measuring issues

52. The Council noted updates from the Panel in respect of measuring. In particular, it considered the following issues:

Measurement of Large/Intermediate Dogs following the introduction of an Intermediate height by the FCI

53. **Note:** In respect of Agility Team GB, all dogs must have a Team GB Height Classification. If their FCI height was different to their KC height, then they can only qualify for the Pre-Selection Qualifier through entering the Open Showcase event. The Kennel Club had confirmed that it would have no objection to dogs competing at different heights at Kennel Club and FCI competitions, following the rules of the organising authority at the time. Full details were available at:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/agility/already-competing-in-agility/agility-team-gb/team-selection-process/#tsp2023tqp>

54. It was noted that the numbers of dogs competing in Intermediate were, in general, only slightly lower than in Large. Due to the difference in the measurements used some dogs in the UK would measure Intermediate but Large under FCI regulations.
 55. Dogs competing at the World Championships and European Open must compete in the height they measure into (they cannot compete in Large if they measured Intermediate). This was of particular relevance to those dogs whose handlers chose not to bring their dogs forward for an intermediate measure when intermediate was introduced in the UK. Competitors may have remained in Large so that they would be eligible and competitive at an international level.
 56. There were two options available:
 - No action – those dogs that did not come forward to be considered for an Intermediate measure or were declared Large to remain in the Kennel Club Large category for the rest of their time competing.
 - Allow dogs that had competed in Large to be voluntarily put forward for a measure to see if they measured into Intermediate (if they had not already been brought forward for an Intermediate measure).
 57. It was also an appropriate time to consider if the ability of owners to declare their dogs Large should be removed ensuring that all dogs were measured and run in their correct heights. A regulation change would be required to ensure all dogs were measured before they competed but might allow for 'obviously' Large dogs to have the second measure struck out.
 58. The Council discussed whether amending the regulations for a small minority was needed. People were possibly choosing their dogs' heights instead of them being measured correctly. A deadline was used previously providing competitors time to come forward for their dog to be measured, but the Council agreed that this would not be extended a second time.
 59. A vote took place on whether or not to review the possibility of allowing Large dogs to be measured into Intermediate, and by a majority, the suggestion of a review was not supported.
 60. On the question of whether or not a review was necessary in respect of all dogs being measured including 'obviously' Large dogs, the majority agreed that this issue should be reviewed, and a suitable item would be placed on the Council's next agenda.
- Cost of Measuring
61. A brief discussion took place in respect of the cost of measuring. It was unanimously agreed to **recommend** that the standard fee for measuring be increased to £6.00. The recommendation would be referred to the Activities

Committee for approval, however it was noted that measurers would be at liberty to set a higher, or lower, fee should they wish to do so.

ITEM 10. REPORT FROM THE JUDGING PANEL AND OTHER JUDGING ISSUES

62. The Council considered a report from the Judging Panel and went on to discuss issues arising from it.

Placement of toys and leads, minimum distances for start and finish, and management of entrances and exits

63. Following discussions at the Council's previous meeting, the Panel wished to propose a number of amendments to regulations with the objective of improving safety.
64. It noted that there had been a number of incidents where dogs had been set up to start outside the confines of the ring. This was either due to a lack of space or where handlers had developed start routines that involved recalling the dog to them at the start.
65. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Gardner.
66. Although some Council members were concerned about indoor events having some difficulties with this requirement, it was not considered to be a major issue. A vote took place and by a majority, the Council agreed to **recommend** the following new regulation for approval:

New regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(4)

TO:

The first and last obstacles must be set a minimum of 5m from the edge of the ring, measured along the dog's most likely path when taking the obstacle, taking into account the dog's likely path from obstacle 1 to obstacle 2.

(Insertion in bold)

(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

67. Another further regulation was required to ensure that handlers no longer started their dogs out of the ring. Handlers would not be allowed to enter the ring without the dog and call it in to join them.
68. A vote took place, and it was unanimously agreed to **recommend** the following new regulation for approval:

New regulation H(1)10.h.

TO:

The handler must set their dog up to start within the ring. Dog and handler must enter the ring together and under no circumstances may a dog be left outside the ring off lead and recalled or sent to the handler in the ring.

(Insertion in bold)
(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

69. The Panel noted that adequate space between rings would be essential to ensure that there was sufficient room for competitors and spectators to move safely around rings without disrupting competing dogs. In venues where space was limited, the distance may be smaller, but some form of visible barrier must be used. Accordingly the Panel wished to propose a new regulation to address the issue.
70. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Hawkswell.
71. A slight amendment was proposed by Mr J Hallam and seconded by Mrs Hawkswell to change the word 'adjacent' to 'opposite' and this was agreed.
72. A vote took place and by a majority the Council agreed to **recommend** the new regulation H(1)9 b. for approval.

New regulation H(1)9 b.

TO:

The minimum space between adjacent rings marked only with single ropes is 5m. Where the distance is less than 5m at least one ring must have a visible barrier (such as netting). Entrances and exits from different rings should not be opposite to avoid congestion in these areas.

(Insertion in bold)
(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

73. The Panel wished to raise concerns arising from the use of crates ringside at shows. Handlers often left crates behind score tents and near entrances and exits of rings. These caused crowding and problems even when there were no dogs in the crates.
74. It was agreed that a safe space was needed for dogs, however, having crates next to the ring caused interference. Competitors with multiple dogs needed a place to put their other dogs whilst running a dog. It was not desirable to have crates close to the ring, and it was therefore up to such competitors to identify suitable solutions which did not cause safety issues.
75. The office suggested an amendment to the wording deleting the words 'unless they are in such an area' and to put the second sentence first.
76. After a brief discussion, Mr Tait proposed acceptance of the amended regulation as suggested and Mrs Gardner seconded the proposal.
77. A vote was taken and by a majority the Council agreed to accept the amendment and **recommend** the new regulation H(1)9 c. for approval:

New regulation H(1)9 c.

TO:

No dogs' crates or boxes should be left near or between rings. Societies may, if they wish, designate areas where dogs' crates and boxes may be left in the vicinity of the rings.

(Insertion in bold)

(Subsequent paragraphs to be renumbered)

Number of runs to be judged in a day

78. At its meetings in January and June 2022, the Council considered issues relating to the number of runs which may be judged by one judge on a single day.
79. After a brief discussion it considered that although judges were not obliged to accept appointments with an excessive amount of runs, there was a need to protect judges.
80. It noted that this matter would remain under review by the Panel whilst it carried out research of what issues caused judges genuine concern.

Activities Judges Sub-Group

81. The Council noted a written report from Mr Huckle following the meeting of the Sub-Group which took place on 24 November 2022.

ITEM 11. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

82. The Council noted that no proposals had been received.

ITEM 12. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Dogs re-negotiating equipment

83. The Council was requested by Mr M Hallam to discuss the situation where a dog re-negotiated an obstacle due to the handler not being happy with the dog's performance, even though the dog had correctly completed the obstacle. A number of options were suggested:
- There should be no option to re-do a piece of equipment.
 - As per FCI regulations, a handler may be permitted to re-do only one obstacle during a run.
 - Judges should be given discretion to allow any reasonable request from the handler.
 - Handler cannot decide to re-do a piece of equipment if they have finished the course, for example, the handler cannot decide to re-do a piece of equipment if the clock has stopped by the dog clearing the final obstacle. It would be necessary to take into account whether the dog had stopped the clock during the course and not as the last obstacle.
 - What would happen in the situation where the dog was already eliminated.

84. The objective of this discussion was to clarify the position of the judge as currently there was confusion on the issue.
85. The Council considered re-negotiating obstacles made ring management complicated and would, if not controlled, lengthen the time of the classes. The main 3 options would be:
- Never allow it.
 - Allow it once.
 - Allow at judge's discretion.
86. It was considered a matter of courtesy for a judge to be asked if a competitor wanted their dog to re-negotiate obstacles, however it wished to ensure judges were not pressurised into allowing handlers permission for their dogs to re-negotiate obstacles.
87. After a brief discussion it was agreed to forward this item to the Judges Panel for further consideration.

Grade appropriate courses

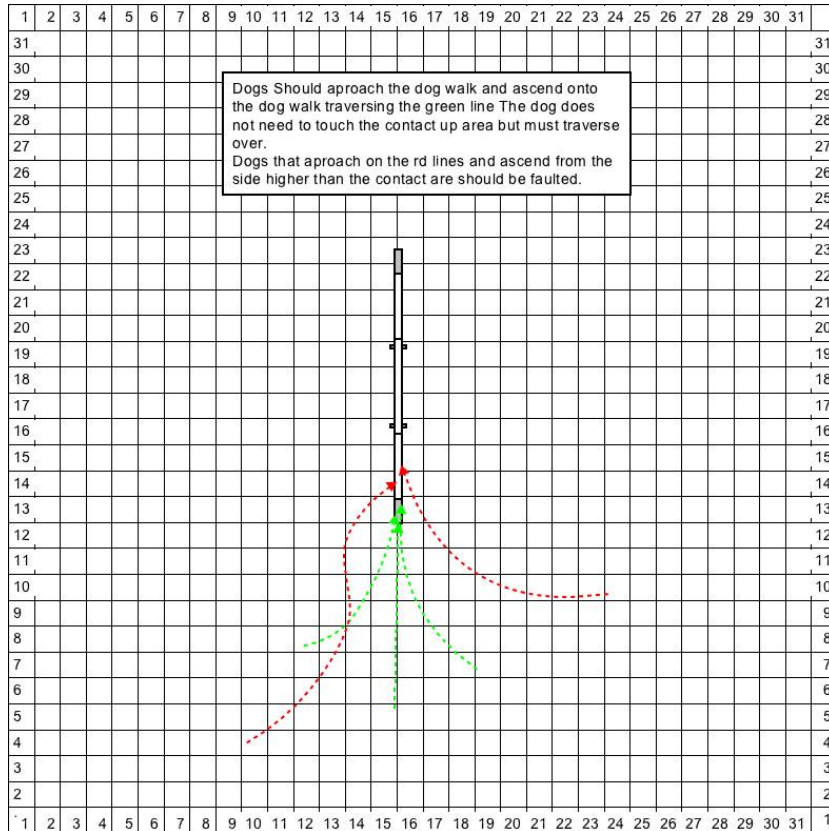
88. The Council was requested by Mr M Hallam to clarify and define what was deemed appropriate for certain grades when a judge was setting their course, particularly with reference to Grades 1-4. This issue was one which was frequently raised within the agility community.
89. Previous guidance was noted, although it was acknowledged that it was outdated and no longer available.
90. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to send the guidance to the Judges Panel for updating.

A-frame and dog walk up contacts

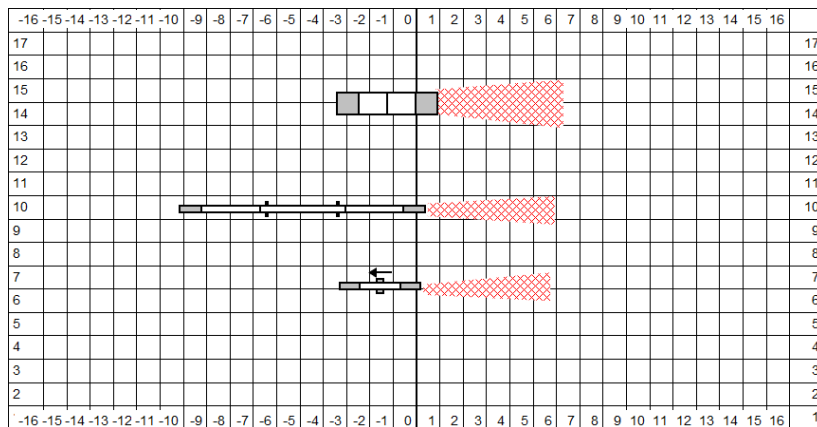
91. Mr Tait requested that the Council discuss potential amendments to the wording relating to marking of contacts.
92. Regulation H(1)(B)5.a.(15) currently specified 'Contact area—5 faults for each failure to make contact.'
93. Mr Tait wished to suggest that the wording be changed as follows:

A-frame and dog walk

94. Exit contact: the dog must make contact with the exit contact. Failure to make contact with the exit contact = 5 Faults
 Approach contact: the dog must traverse over, but does not have to make contact with, the approach contact. Traversing the A-frame or dog walk from the side above the approach contact area = 5 Faults as per the diagram.



95. Mr Tait was of the view that guidance should also be included to recognise that safe approach onto contacts should be considered when course designing for agility classes, with a suggestion that the dog’s predicted path from the previous obstacle should allow the dog to traverse along the area marked by the red funnel.



- Seesaw**
96. Dog must make contact with both the approach and exit contact. Failure to make contact = 5 faults for each contact missed. Leaving the seesaw before it touches the ground = 5 faults.

97. The Council discussed the FCI regulation change whereby up contacts for the A-frame and the dog walk were no longer required, and noted the aim was to stop dogs breaking stride. An up contact was still required for the see-saw.
98. After a brief discussion it was unanimously agreed that the Council was in support of the principle and the Judges Panel was requested to formulate a proposal for submission to the next Council meeting.

Repeating jumps on a course

99. Mr Tait wished the Council to discuss a suggestion that jumps on a course should not be repeated without at least 5 obstacles in between.
100. Mr Tait was of the view that this was a safety issue. In some cases, where a jump was repeated, it would become a considerable hazard to both dog and owner should the dog knock the pole or wing. Such incidents were often not reported in the incident book.
101. Putting in a minimum requirement of 5 obstacles in between would allow the ring party or the judge to either replace or remove the obstacle, or to make a judgement call to stop the dog running. However, the Council was of the opinion that a five-obstacle gap would not allow adequate time and would not solve the issue.
102. After consideration, it was agreed that imposing this requirement may be problematic for indoor venues with limited space which may necessitate some obstacles being repeated on a course.
103. The Council did not support this suggestion, however it considered it would be useful for the Judges Panel to consider possible guidance for judges regarding the safety issues when repeating obstacles on a course.

Introduction of a 'soft' wall

104. Mr M Hallam, representing Ms N Wildman wished to request that the Council discuss safety issues relating to the wall, and to suggest the introduction of a 'soft' wall.

Regulation H(1)(B)3.b currently stated:

Wall—The height of the wall must be 600mm for Large Dogs, 500mm for Intermediate Dogs, 400mm for Medium Dogs and 300mm for Small Dogs. Width: 1.2m. All central units must be easily displaced by the dog and not interlocking with the pillars. Pillars with a minimum height of 900mm and a depth of 300mm must be used.

105. Ms Wildman suggested the addition of the following wording:

Central elements should have a uniform depth of 200mm. All elements must be made of an impact-absorbing material.

106. For a number of years the safety of agility equipment had been improving, however, the design of the wall jump had not changed in recent years. The

wall posed some challenges not seen in other items of equipment such as: jumping with no visibility of the next part of the course and jumping something with a depth.

107. It appeared the main concern regarding a change to soft walls was the resistance to the wind. Working alongside Performance Agility, a wind resistant impact absorbent wall had been designed using magnets attached to the more stable pillars to hold the central elements in place. This provided a wall which was both more stable, and safer than its solid counterparts which were already unstable in windy conditions.
108. The judges survey showed a positive response for the use of soft wall jumps if these were available for shows, however, some judges still had safety concerns regarding the wall and would not include it in their courses.
109. A query was raised regarding the robustness of a soft wall, noting that it would be necessary for it to be suitable to withstand conditions at clubs, such as being left outdoors for prolonged periods, and that it must be waterproof, and resistant to damage by mice (for example). It was noted that a wall had been tested outdoors for six months and was still intact through all weather conditions.
110. It was also considered that supply was not the issue, however, the proposed dimensions would need to be provided for the suppliers and to ask how much time they would require to prepare the jump equipment.
111. The majority of the Council were in support of the principle for the soft wall replacing the current design as soon as possible. Once this had been finalised, The Kennel Club would need to provide a transition period in which clubs would obtain the soft walls.
112. The Council, after further discussion and by a show of hands unanimously agreed to request the Equipment Panel to progress the issue and consider the practical timeframes.

Diversity and inclusion – disability awareness in agility

113. Mr J Hallam wished the Council to discuss diversity and inclusion in agility particularly with regard to those with disabilities, to ensure the discipline was fully inclusive and protected the needs of competitors, organisers and helpers.
114. In past years people with disabilities had been involved in agility in a range of capacities including as competitors and helpers and it was important to support them.

Issues for consideration were:

- Usage/guidance on medical aids around competitions.
- Recognising people need adjustments around shows.
- Not all disabilities were visible, look at rolling out the Hidden Disability Scheme, Sunflower lanyard to recognise people need support.
- Ensure that there is medical and legal guidance in the support.

115. The Council agreed that it was important to ensure that agility was inclusive to all, with due consideration given to those with a disability or a protected characteristic, and that suitable guidance was available to show organisers to assist them in doing so.
116. After discussing the above it was agreed that show organisers needed to be mindful of the wide variety of disabilities. Those which were easily recognisable and those which were less perceptible.
117. The office also commented that The Kennel Club was in the process of updating its diversity and inclusion policy, which would relate to all disciplines. The Council members were requested to forward any examples of the way in which disabilities or health conditions (visible or not) could impact competitors and what measures may be taken to help them to Mr J Hallam who would collate the information and liaise with the office as appropriate.

Test runs

118. The Council was requested by Mr J Hallam to consider a suggestion that a judge may test their course by allowing dogs, other than their own, to be run over it prior to commencement of a class. This would allow judges to see the lines and flow of the course, and to provide an opportunity to check visibility to allow clear judging of runs. Only handlers and dogs not entered into the relevant class would be permitted to run the course.
119. A test run was often carried out the day before the competition day as there may be insufficient time when changing courses during a competition. This would allow a smoother transition during judging and would allow for competition days to run more efficiently. It would also provide an opportunity for judges to see the course being run by dogs different to their own, for example, dogs of different sizes.
120. In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards stated:
- 5.4 Check that the course is laid out as required, and that it is safe, and suitable for the standard of dog being run. Measure the course using the approved straight line method and calculate the course time. To assist the judge it is permissible to run his/her own dog round the course.
121. Although it was acknowledged that this was intended to assist the judges, there was concern regarding the potential for abuse by competitors wishing to gain advantage, therefore, the majority showed little support for the suggestion and agreed that it would not be progressed further.
- Regulations H19.e.and H27.a(7)
122. The discussion item was presented by Mr Ellis on behalf of Mrs B Hodson, who noted the provisions of the above regulations, which currently stated:

Regulation H19.e:

Judges at an agility show may not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their ownership or part ownership; or handle a dog at the show/competition at which they are judging.

Regulation H27.a:

Disqualification and forfeit of awards

A dog may be disqualified by the Board from any award whether an objection has been lodged or not, if proved amongst other things to have been;

(7): Entered for competition or handled in the ring by a judge at that competition. This shall not apply to dogs owned by a judge appointed in an emergency.

123. Mrs Hodson wished the Council to discuss suggested amendments to the wording of these regulations, as follows:

Regulation H19.e:

Judges at an agility show may not judge a dog which is recorded in their ownership or part ownership; or handle a dog at the show/competition at which they are judging.

Regulation H27.a:

A dog may be disqualified by the Board from any award whether an objection has been lodged or not, if proved amongst other things to have been;

(7) Judged by their registered owner or handled in the ring by a judge at that competition. This shall not apply to dogs owned by a judge appointed in an emergency.

124. There were now many families and couples in agility who may share the handling of their dogs, or close friends who shared the training of their dogs. Putting a limitation on judges' dogs being entered at a show would potentially deter people from giving up their day to judge, making it harder for show secretaries to recruit judges. More flexibility may also encourage more people to take up judging too and help to meet the current demands for numerous judges every weekend.
125. There would still be a rule in place to prevent a judge physically judging their own dogs, as this would tie in with the family/spouse rule and avoid complaints of bias.
126. It was anticipated that this amendment would assist in encouraging judges to accept appointments if families, relatives or household members with co-owned dogs would also be able to enter shows.
127. After a brief discussion, the Council was in support of the suggested regulation amendments and it was agreed that Mr Ellis (in consultation with Mrs Hodson) would submit a formal proposal for consideration at the Council's next meeting.

Non-slip tunnels

128. Ms G Lott, represented by Mr Ellis, wished the Council to consider a suggestion that all tunnels should be made from fully non-slip materials. If agreed, it would be necessary to amend the relevant regulation as below:

Regulation H(1)(B)3.i

TO:

Pipe Tunnel—This obstacle should have a diameter of a minimum of 600mm and should be a minimum of 3m in length. The tunnel may only curve in a single direction. **Tunnels must be made from full anti-slip materials.**
(Insertion in bold)

- With the advancement of manufacturing, tunnels were commonly made from full anti-slip materials.
 - It was known that as dogs move quicker through tunnels, they make contact with not just the bottom of the tunnel but often 'bank'. Full anti-slip tunnels would provide greater areas of non-slip surface that would allow dogs to continue moving safely through tunnels with reduced risk of slipping.
 - There have been numerous occasions where dogs have 'flipped' upside down inside tunnels or have slipped. The use of full anti-slip tunnels would help to reduce the incidences of this occurring.
129. A view was also expressed that all tunnels should be the same and anti-slip.
130. There were a range of factors involved in the design of tunnels and it was still possible for dogs to slip even where non-slip materials were used.
131. After some discussion the Council was in favour of anti-slip materials being used, however, some research would be required on which materials would work best for the safety of dogs.
132. It was agreed to refer this issue to the Equipment Panel for consideration and if necessary, submit a suitable proposal. The Equipment Panel would need to work with manufacturers who had extensive knowledge and to work on any issues.

Health issues in relation to ring sizes

133. Mrs Bostock, on behalf of Ms J Linch, wished the Council to raise concerns regarding the practice by some clubs of extending ring sizes to 40m x 40m. It was noted that whilst there was a Kennel Club minimum size for rings of 32m x 32m, there was no maximum size.
134. Ms Linch was of the view that some 40m x 40m rings have course lengths of over 200m to run, and that whilst the running distance was possibly fine for the younger generation, or for those with larger dogs that can run ahead, it was becoming more and more difficult, and even dangerous for the older generation.

135. Ms Linch was concerned that in extreme cases there may be potential health risks for some handlers, which may be serious or even life-threatening, and wished to suggest that the Council consider the introduction of a maximum ring size and suggests that 33m x 33mm may be appropriate. This would allow handlers of all ages to continue to enjoy the discipline.
136. After a brief discussion, the Council was not in support of Ms Linch's suggestion.

ITEM 13. AGILITY TEAM GB

137. The Council noted a report on the activities of Agility Team GB.

ITEM 14. STRATEGY DOCUMENT

138. The current strategy document was reviewed, and the following comments noted:
139. The office advised that the document had been updated from the Council meeting in June 2022.
140. Safeguarding – keeping this on the strategy document would assist in ensuring that the matter was reviewed on a regular basis. Some Council members considered that this needed more work including DBS checks to protect children at shows.
141. The office explained that there were limits on control especially at non-Kennel Club events.
142. The Council discussed the overall document which it considered needed some work to make it clear what actions were required and its intended direction over the next few years.
143. The office reminded the Council that this was a live document which needed to be updated regularly in order for it to see how its strategy was working and what the results were. Any new items would be added. The Council agreed to work on the document to ensure it encapsulated the full plan for the next few years and record progress on an ongoing basis together with full details as to whom on the Council would be working on which project.

ITEM 15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

144. The Council wished to remind members of the agility community that any issues may be raised with the Council but should be submitted via a Council representative.

ITEM 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

145. The Council's next meeting would take place at The Kennel Club in Clarges Street on 6 July 2023.

146. Any items for the agenda must be submitted by 7 April 2023.

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

MR M HALLAM

Chairman

THE KENNEL CLUB'S MISSION STATEMENT

'The Kennel Club is the national body which exists to promote the general improvement, health and well-being of all dogs through responsible breeding and ownership'