



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL
HELD ON
THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2022 AT 10.00 AM IN THE BOARDROOM, THE
KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET

PRESENT

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

* indicates attendance via Teams

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Head of Canine Activities
Miss C McHardy	Manager - Education, Training, and 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.
2. It was noted that Mr Hinchley had resigned from his role as a representative for the South/South West on the Council.
3. The two new representatives, Mr J Hallam and Mrs Robinson, were welcomed to the meeting, as was Mrs Gardner who was returning to the Council.



ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

ITEM 3. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Council noted that the Board, at its meeting on 5 April 2022, approved the following amendments to H Regulations:

Regulation H(1)(B)3.j.

TO:

Weaving Poles—The ~~minimum~~ number of poles should be ~~five~~ **either six or twelve** and the ~~maximum number 12.~~ **The maximum number of weaves in a standard class is 12.** They should be in a continuous line, as straight as possible and should be 600mm apart (between the poles). The poles must be of rigid construction and with a minimum height of 762mm and a diameter ~~between 32mm and 38mm~~ **of 35mm**. The base must have support bars at the bottom of each pole and they must be positioned away from the side a dog would normally negotiate each bar.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2023)

6. It was noted that there was some confusion within the agility community as to the wording which stated that weaves 'should be in a continuous line' as it was not clear if this referred to all of the weaves in a course, or to individual sets. It was confirmed that there had been no change to the wording of this part of the regulation, and that it was perfectly acceptable for two separate sets of six weaves to be included in a course. This was noted, and guidance would be included within future versions of the Guide for Judges.

ITEM 4. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

7. The Council noted a written report from Mr Tait following the Sub-Group's meeting on 4 April 2022. The main issues discussed by the Sub-Group were as follows:
 - **'A' Ramp:** research was to be undertaken to review stride patterns onto the 'A' ramp to ensure that dogs were not being asked to adjust their approach in order to make an up contact
 - **See-saw:** research would be undertaken into see-saws which could be used to minimise vibration and impact forces. It was also hoped that in due course guidance into ways in which a see-saw could be secured would be provided.
 - **General canine welfare:** The Sub-Group was keen to address concerns relating to obesity in dogs, and to promote the awareness of the necessity for dogs to be fit.
 - **Funding Levy:** It was hoped the proposed levy would be a useful tool. It was suggested that each discipline would have governance over funds raised and would allocate funds as appropriate, although it was likely that some areas of research would also apply to other disciplines. Further investigation would be undertaken as to how much funding could be raised, and to consider the possibility that a cap be placed on the total amount of funding to be raised, to prevent an open-ended commitment.



ITEM 5. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL

8. There were currently no issues reported from the Equipment Panel.

ITEM 6. REPORT FROM THE AGILITY GOVERNANCE PANEL

9. The Council noted a report from the Governance Panel and discussed a number of issues arising from the Council's previous meeting, as below:

Competition Manager's role

10. At its meeting on 27 January 2022, the Council discussed the role of the Competition Manager, and whether rather than placing the responsibility on the shoulders of one person, the organising team should be collectively responsible for undertaking the duties of a Competition Manager, and should ensure that the necessary skill sets were in place within the team. There was some support for this, although there was also a concern that collective responsibility may be problematic if there was any disagreement within the team, and that it may be preferable for there to be one specific individual as the ultimate authority to make necessary decisions, with the proviso that he or she would be able to consult as required.
11. As agreed, the Governance Panel had considered the matter further, and was of the view that it would be sensible to formulate set criteria to ensure that Competition Managers were competent to fulfil the role, rather than just issuing guidance.
12. It was highlighted that under the provisions of H Regulations, Competition Managers were not permitted to enter for competition a dog which was recorded in their ownership or part ownership, or work a dog at the agility show, and that as a result it was sometimes difficult to appoint individuals who were willing to undertake the role. Although this was accepted, the importance of having a suitably qualified individual in the role of Competition Manager, who was fully able to deal with issues arising at a show, was stressed. It was hoped that those who were already undertaking the role may be willing to undergo the qualification process, once the relevant criteria were in place.
13. The Competition Manager would generally work together with the organising team, especially with the show secretary, to ensure that all ran as smoothly as possible, and for this reason it would be important to consider the way in which the key roles would work together when formulating the criteria. It was emphasised that there was no regulation preventing show secretaries from competing with their own dog.
14. A query was raised as to whether Kennel Club seminars for organisers of agility shows were still available. The Council was advised that there had been very limited demand for the seminar, but it was also reminded that the matter had been discussed at its January meeting when it was agreed that a suggestion to run such a seminar in the near future, possibly on an online basis, should be progressed. It was in agreement that attendance at a seminar should form part of the criteria for the Competition Manager's role. An online seminar was considered to be ideal, as attendance would not present undue difficulty for those in more remote areas.

Funding for research projects

15. At its previous meeting the Council, at the request of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group, had considered a suggestion whereby a small levy could be placed on entries for Kennel Club licensed agility shows. This proposed levy would be used for specific purposes,



such as to provide funding for additional research that would benefit all disciplines, for specific agility research, and other specific agility issues.

16. The Council was not of the view that any final decision could be made without further clarification as to the way in which the levy would be made, and how funds would be used. However, a show of hands had indicated a small majority in favour of the general principle of the levy, for use in research projects, subject to such clarification being provided.
17. It noted that the Sub-Group had accepted that, should it be agreed that funding raised by a levy should be used for a range of purposes rather than for health and welfare matters, it would no longer fall within the Sub-Group's scope and it would be for discipline-specific groups to progress.
18. The Governance Panel had already identified two areas that needed significant investment: training, support and mentoring for judges, and training and support for measurers. However, it also expressed some concern as to whether the implementation of a levy was appropriate in the current financial climate, with rising costs causing hardships for many. If it was decided to proceed, careful communication of the objectives would be vital to ensure support from the agility community.
19. No specific figure had yet been set for the proposed levy, but it was envisioned that it would be approximately 5p-10p per entry. The Council was not of the view that this would be unduly onerous, and it was estimated that a sum of £30-£40,000 may be raised and could potentially be used for the continued education and development of agility judges, over and above training currently provided via The Kennel Club.
20. A brief discussion took place as to the way in which a fund may be administered, and the Council requested assurances that it would be placed by The Kennel Club into a ring-fenced fund to ensure it would only be used for the purposes for which it had been intended. It was clarified by the office that any funds raised would be coded for allocation for specific projects as agreed.
21. The Council also highlighted the necessity for complete transparency in the way in which funds were used, and for the agility community to be kept fully informed.
22. It was hoped that Dr Boyd, the chair of the Sub-Group, would meet in the near future to discuss the matter with Mr Johnstone, The Kennel Club's Chief Financial Officer. Mr M Hallam undertook to liaise with Dr Boyd and would provide an update to the Council at its next meeting. **[Afternote:** Mr Hallam discussed the matter with Dr Boyd following the meeting and it was suggested that in the current economic climate it was not appropriate to impose a levy on entries and the matter would not be progressed further at the current time.]
23. In response to a query it was clarified that the other activities disciplines had not been in agreement with the imposition of a levy on entry fees within their own disciplines.
Bitches in season competing at Kennel Club prestige invitational events
24. At its previous meeting, Ms J Paige had sought the Council's views on a suggestion that bitches in season should be eligible to compete at Kennel Club prestige invitation events such as at quarter and semi-finals for the Agility Stakes, The Kennel Club Agility Stakes finals, and agility competitions held at Crufts and Discover Dogs. The Council had indicated its support for the principle.
25. It now noted the Panel's views, which were:



- Bitches in season were allowed to compete in many overseas competitions and there was no evidence of any negative impact on other competitors.
 - The events that would be affected were mostly held at venues where there would already be bitches in season present, competing in other events or participating in displays.
 - Many dogs at major events were likely to be competing in the higher grades and would therefore have significant competition experience, and the ability to maintain focus even where there were potential distractions.
 - Competitors that had qualified for any finals would have worked hard to qualify and build their dog's readiness to these events. To exclude them from events would be unfair and would lower the standard of competition.
26. Accordingly, the Panel proposed an amendment to regulations in the interest of fairness and to maintain the standard of competition at prestige events.
27. A concern was raised that it may be problematic for bitches in season to compete at prestige events, such as The Kennel Club International Agility Festival (KCI AF), where other competitions and classes were taking place, possibly in the same ring. It was accepted that this was a concern, but that few events would be affected in this way. At the KCI AF there were only two prestige competitions (Novice Cup and Teams) where competitors did not qualify at the event itself.
28. The Council was unanimous in its support for the principle of the proposal, and went on to consider the specific wording for the regulation amendment. It was clarified that if approved, it would only apply to prestige events organised by The Kennel Club and would not cover other events, such as qualifiers or semi-finals organised by other clubs.
29. A revised proposal was made by Mrs Hawkswell, and it was seconded by Mr Ellis.
30. By a unanimous vote, the Council **recommended** the following amendments for approval:
- 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.**
(Insertion in bold)
- Regulation H.13 Removal of dogs from competition
TO:
a. A bitch which is in season **(apart from a dog competing quarter finals, semi-finals and finals of Kennel Club Prestige Events.)**
(Insertion in bold)
- Competitors moving equipment
31. At its previous meeting the Council discussed issues concerning competitors moving equipment during course walking or between classes, without the permission of the relevant judges. It had been in agreement that the judge was responsible for setting a safe course, and movement of equipment by competitors therefore constituted a safety matter and as such, was totally inappropriate behaviour. It had concluded that any individual found to have moved equipment should be subject to strong sanctions.



32. The Council now considered a proposal from the Panel, which noted that there was already a regulation in place which allowed for a dog to be removed from competition if it was interfering with the safety of another competitor. The Panel proposed that a similar regulation be introduced which would allow for a competitor to be prevented from competing and/or removed from an agility show if they were interfering with the safety or chance of winning of an opponent. This would allow the Competition Manager to ask a competitor to leave the show if they were deemed to have interfered with a course.
33. A brief discussion took place as to whether such a regulation would affect those who may pick up a dropped pole or similar, in good faith, however it was emphasised that there was no intention for it to do so, and that the objective of the proposal was to regulate for those who deliberately made a change to a course without the knowledge or permission of the judge. The Council did acknowledge that a competitor may make a minor change to a course with the best of intentions, such as tucking in a number closer to an obstacle, but that doing so may in fact have an unforeseen and significant effect on the course, and may result in a safety issue. For this reason it was emphasised that the judge was in control of the ring and that no changes, even apparently minor ones, should be made without the judge's agreement.
34. The Council was in full agreement with the principle of the Panel's proposal but did not consider that it would adequately address the issue. A revised amendment, drafted by the office, was suggested, and was proposed by Mr Dornford-Smith. It was seconded by Mrs Bostock.
35. The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval, as follows:
- New Regulation H.15
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 from the competition. All such removals should be reported to The Kennel Club in the Incident Book.
(Insertion in bold)
- Measuring
36. A concern was raised in respect of the measuring situation in Northern Ireland, which had now become urgent. Some competitors were unable to compete at present as they had not been able to get their dogs measured. It was confirmed by Mrs Gardner that there had been some difficulties in obtaining a suitable venue, and in identifying a date which did not clash with other events which would prevent people from being able to attend. However a measuring session would be carried out in Northern Ireland in July. Details of the date and venue would be released as soon as possible.
37. The office also advised the meeting that training for measurers would take place in Scotland and the North West in September, and a further training session would take place at The Kennel Club Building at Stoneleigh in October.
38. The appointment of Senior Measurers would be addressed by the office in due course.

ITEM 7. REPORT FROM THE JUDGING PANEL AND OTHER JUDGING ISSUES

39. The Council noted a report from the Judging Panel.
- Activities Judges Sub-Group
40. The Council noted that Mr Hinchley, who had been elected by the Council as its representative on the Sub-Group, had stood down from his role on the Council and therefore the Sub-Group, and it was therefore necessary to elect a replacement.



41. Mrs Gardner and Mr Tait offered their services. A vote took place, and Mrs Gardner was elected to the role.
42. A verbal update was provided by the office following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 5 May 2022. The main issues discussed were as follows:
- Minimum standards for Competition Managers/Chief Stewards in all disciplines remained under discussion. The Sub-Group expressed some concern regarding the lack of progress on this matter.
 - Roles and remit: whilst it was accepted that there was some overlap between the roles of the Sub-Group and the Council, it was emphasised that the remit of the Sub-Group was to consider issues relating to judges and judging across all disciplines and that it should be kept informed of relevant matters discussed by the Council.
 - The revised Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards (which now incorporated the Guide to Agility Equipment) was currently being proof-read and formatted by the office. It would be published as soon as possible but some delays had been caused due to office resources. Mrs Hawkswell offered her assistance if required.
 - Criticism and intimidation of judges: the Sub-Group was of the view that levels of criticism of judges had dropped considerably over the course of the season, and there had been minimal levels of adverse comments being made on social media. The situation would be monitored.
 - Training Board: Miss Pogodzinski remained the representative for all activities disciplines and was thanked for her work.
 - Reaccreditations: There was a backlog in the reaccreditation of Accredited Trainers in all disciplines. This was being addressed.
 - Judging criteria: The Sub-Group emphasised the importance for judges in all disciplines of keeping their judging records up to date, and of ensuring that they complied with requirements regarding the necessity to take, and pass, examinations relevant to their discipline, on a regular basis, as defined within Kennel Club regulations.
43. In response to a query, it was confirmed that there was no regulatory requirement for judges to maintain records, but that it was good practice to do so. It was hoped that at some point in the future it would be possible for information to be available on The Kennel Club's website as to whether a judge had passed an agility judging examination, but it was not as yet possible to state a timeframe for this.
- Appointment of Accredited Trainers
44. An update regarding the appointment of new Accredited Trainers was requested, and it was confirmed by the office that this was in hand. Some applications had been received and it was anticipated that assessments could be carried out in conjunction with the Accredited Trainers Annual Seminar in October.
- Qualification of judges
45. Some concern was raised that no information was publicly available as to whether or not any particular individual had passed a judging examination, and that it was up to the agility community to highlight anyone who may be undertaking judging appointments without being qualified to do so. However it was emphasised that the discipline, like others, was based on trust and this would continue to be the case. Should there be any concern regarding any



individual, the office was happy to check their status on request, although it was not considered that there was a significant issue with judges not having passed the examination. The Council agreed that it was important to trust judges, and that those who were not considered to do a good job should not be reinvited.

46. Further, it was highlighted that under the provisions of Regulation H17.b., societies were required to include the following wording in judges' invitation letters:

'In accepting this invitation you agree to be bound by Kennel Club Rules and Regulations and the Kennel Club Code of Best Practice for Judges, and confirm that you are qualified to judge in accordance with Agility Regulation H18.'

Show organisers may, if they wish, request that judges specify the date on which they undertook the examination when accepting an appointment.

47. A suggestion was also made that judges training should also include requirements for CPD and for training audits and assessments to be in place. This was noted. It was highlighted that the Council's five-year plan included a provision to 'create a structure to support, train and protect agility judges through training and outreach' and this would include a review of the judges education system, although this would not be a short-term project.

48. It was highlighted that some of the films on the Kennel Club Academy included outdated information, and that some of the questions in the examination required review. The Council was advised that the office was in the process of implementing a system whereby such resources would be subject to annual review and updating.

Placement of leads and rewards

49. **Note:** this item was discussed in conjunction with a discussion item submitted by Mrs M Melville-Love regarding the potential implementation of a 5m rule for the first obstacle, which appeared later on the agenda.
50. At its meeting in January 2022, the Council discussed solutions as to the entry and exit procedure for the ring to prevent conflict with competitors, spectators and other dogs, primarily at the exit of the ring at the end of a run. A suggestion had been made that a dedicated and safe 'finish area' could be set, in which rewards may be given. A safe 'start zone' could also be provided, where only the competing dog and handler would be allowed. It had also been suggested that the careful placement of start and finish obstacles could also be instrumental in reducing the potential for incidents.
51. The Council considered the views of the Judging Panel, which noted that the available options included:
- making regulatory changes which clearly defined how ring entrances and exits must be marked or fenced, and how they were used
 - the issuing of guidelines which clarified the issues that must be taken into account, together with recommendations regarding ways of controlling access.
52. It also noted the suggestion made by Mrs Melville-Love that the existing regulation should be amended to state 'Should ring size allow, the first obstacle should be at least 5m from the edge of the ring. In circumstances where this is not possible, the judge should look at starting the dog jumping away from the course towards the edge of the ring.'
53. Mrs Melville-Love's view was that such a provision was in the interests of dogs' health and welfare, and that for a dog to fully engage the requisite muscle groups for take-off, it must first have enough speed and momentum. If a dog was only travelling a short distance to the first



obstacle, it would not have sufficient time for this to occur, thereby giving rise to the potential for injury.

54. A note of caution was raised in that careful consideration should be given to the way in which any mandatory changes would affect prestige events such as Crufts, Discover Dogs, and the Kennel Club Agility Stakes, and any other events where space may be limited.
 55. A discussion took place as to whether any guidance or regulatory change should refer to the trajectory of the dog, taking into account the line to be taken from the first obstacle to the second. The 5m rule would therefore be based on the starting point of the dog based on the trajectory. However, there was some concern that doing so would have implications on course design and may place undue restrictions on competitors who should be free to set their dog up to start from a position of their own choosing.
 56. It was accepted that to some extent the issue was one of judges training. Seminars already included training for judges as to how to manage ring entrances and exits, with particular reference to the safety of all. It was highlighted that attending such seminars was of benefit not only to judges but for all participants in agility, such as competitors and to members of ring parties, all of whom were encouraged to attend.
 57. Having considered the matter carefully, the Council concluded that detailed guidance should be issued with regard to the management of starts and finishes. However, in view of concerns that guidance was not always followed, it was also in agreement with Mrs Melville-Love that amendments to regulations should be put into place to state that the first obstacle should be placed 5m from the edge of the ring. It was of the view that this should also apply to the final obstacle.
 58. It was also suggested that guidance should be provided to judges and competitors in relation to the placement of leads and toys, in view of particular concerns with their being placed behind scrim tents, which constituted a safety risk. It was also not considered desirable for dogs to exit the ring into a crate, in the interests of the safety of the dog.
 59. There was general consensus from the Council on the above issues. Accordingly, the Judging Panel undertook to consider the formulation of detailed proposals relating to the placement of toys and leads, minimum distances for start and finish, and management of entrances and exits, for consideration by the Council at its next meeting.
- Number of runs to be judged in a day
60. At its meeting in January 2022, the Council had considered the provisions of Regulation H(1)9.e., which stated that 'The maximum number of individual runs a person shall judge on one day is 450, excluding unforeseen eventualities such as re-runs.' A suggestion was made that a sliding scale be introduced which would take the number of classes into account.
 61. The Council had expressed its support for the principle, with the proviso that it would not be necessary to specify a minimum number of dogs as only a maximum would be required, and that guidance, rather than regulatory controls, would be adequate.
 62. The matter had been referred to the Judging Panel for further consideration as to how it may be progressed. The Council noted that the matter would remain under review while the Panel carried out a wider review of issues which were of particular concern to judges, and how these may be addressed.
 63. It was highlighted that one major issue was the number of course changes which may be required during the day, which may be excessively time-consuming. This may particularly apply to smaller shows where it was likely that there would be a number of smaller classes.



64. It was hoped that the matter may be addressed by means of careful management by show organisers, rather than by introducing mandatory measures which may be overly prescriptive and which may not be helpful for shows in all areas, due to regional differences.
65. It was agreed that setting limits on the amount of time available for course walking was not practical, but one suggestion was that the issue may be addressed by means of combining course walking for small/medium dogs and for intermediate/large dogs which would reduce the amount of time required. The Council was of the opinion that this would be a viable option.
66. The Council's views were noted, and the matter would be further considered by the Judging Panel.
67. There were also concerns regarding judges who were not prepared to wait for competitors who were in a queue for another class. Whilst it was acknowledged that it was not possible to avoid all clashes of class, it would be helpful to provide guidance.
68. Another issue relating to the number of shows was highlighted in respect of the difficulties experienced by some shows where another show was taking place in the same area on the same day. There was a view that the situation had been exacerbated by the change to licensing regulations whereby a society may apply for a licence six weeks before a show. This allowed for shows to be arranged at short notice, sometimes to the detriment of an existing show in the same area, however the Council was not of the view that clashes could be effectively prevented.

Electronic Contacts

69. At its previous meeting, the Council had considered the potential use of electronic contacts in Kennel Club competitions. It had been unanimous in its support for the use of such devices to assist judges, with the caveat that the Council would wish to be reassured on the matter of reliability. It was also emphasised that judges using such devices would still be expected to judge contacts in a visual manner, as was currently the case.
70. The Equipment Panel and the Judges Panel had undertaken to jointly carry out further research. The Council noted that it had not as yet been possible to progress this matter.
71. Mr Ellis advised the Council that he had recent experience of using electronic contacts whilst judging in Norway. The experience had been largely positive, although there had been some issues, possibly due to calibration problems.
72. Noting that the main concerns regarding electronic contacts were reliability and accuracy, it was hoped that testing could be carried out, initially in an indoor venue. This would provide data relating to both of these factors, as tested in ideal circumstances. Should tests prove successful, further testing could be carried out in more challenging conditions at an outdoor show. It was suggested that it may be preferable for such testing to be carried out not by a judge during a 'live' appointment, but by an external user outside the ring. The results obtained in this way could be compared against the decisions made by the judge based only on what he or she had observed.
73. An update would be given to the Council at its next meeting.

ITEM 8. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

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



74. Mr Ellis wished the Council to consider a proposal to reduce the capped class limits at Kennel Club licensed open and limited shows. Mr Ellis noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, The Kennel Club made a number of relaxations to H regulations to allow for the safe continuation of Kennel Club licensed events, one of which was to reduce the class capping limit at Kennel Club licensed open and limited agility shows to 50. Dogs were still able to be awarded warrant points, and grade progression points, and wins had still counted towards progression. This relaxation was only in place until 31 December 2021, after which the capping limit reverted to 250.
75. Mr Ellis was of the view that reverting to the capping limit of 50 would allow show organisers to plan efficiently, and would allow the use of appropriate indoor arenas for competitions, many of which were purpose-built. Further, he noted that graded class sizes at shows often fell below the proposed new capping limit as more private individuals/businesses were hosting shows and offering a large number of graded classes per day, the majority of which had less dogs entered into each grade than the proposed new lower capping limit.
76. The proposal was seconded by Mr Dornford-Smith.
77. There were mixed views on the matter. There was some support for the proposal, although there was also a concern that it would result in more combined classes such as grades 1-3, 4-6, and 5-7.
78. It was accepted that show organisers were already able to manage the number of competitors at a show by offering a limited range of classes, for example classes for only small and medium dogs. It was also stressed capping would remain optional. Clubs may decide whether to cap any classes at all, and if they wished to do so, they could select which classes should be capped. It was anticipated that the proposal would assist those shows where facilities such as space or car parking were limited.
79. A concern was expressed that capping classes would make it difficult for some people to enter shows, as entries in capped classes were accepted on a 'first come first served' basis and those with work or other commitments may not be able to make an online entry as soon as a show went 'live', which was considered to be unfair. There was a particular concern that competitors in the lower grades would be particularly affected, resulting in difficulties in their ability to progress. Further, people would attempt to enter, not knowing whether or not they would be successful, which made planning very difficult, although it was considered likely that the proposal, if successful, would affect a relatively small number of competitors. It was also acknowledged that in some areas there was a relatively small number of shows and if a competitor's entry was not accepted, there may not be other shows that they could attend.
80. The Council's attention was drawn to the fact that societies may run limited shows, at which the special classes may be 'limited by numbers or class entries, overall numbers of entries, specific breeds, residence of competitors, membership of societies or organisations or in any other manner at the discretion of the organisers' noting that this option would be subject to approval by The Kennel Club. However it was highlighted that at a limited show, a maximum of four standard classes may be scheduled, which offered only limited opportunities for competitors wishing to progress. Whilst limited shows offered a good opportunity for some show societies wishing to manage the size of a show, the option to cap some classes at an open show offered a good degree of flexibility and may be preferable in some circumstances.
81. Some discussion took place as to the level of entries at which a cap would be permissible. The existing minimum of 250 appeared to be quite high in relation to the number of entries being received for most shows, but there was also a view that 50 was too low.



82. Noting all of the above points, the Council acknowledged that clubs already had considerable flexibility in respect of capped classes. They may choose to cap only selected classes, at whatever level they wished (subject to the current minimum of 250, which would reduce to 50 should the proposed regulation amendment be approved).
83. Having discussed the proposal in some detail, a vote took place, and by a majority, the Council **recommended** the following amendment for approval:
- 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)
- Proposed amendments to Regulation H(1)(B)4
84. Mr G Derrett, an individual, wished to propose amendments to the above regulation. The proposal was presented by Mrs Hawkswell, and was seconded by Mrs Gardner.
85. Mr Derrett was of the view that there was evidence that a significant proportion of dogs competing at the top levels of Kennel Club agility were competing in the wrong height category. Measuring carried out by two Senior Kennel Club measurers (for Agility Team GB measures up to 28 February 2022) had identified a significant proportion of dogs that came forward were currently competing in the wrong height category. This indicated that 8.2% of small, medium & intermediate dogs receiving a GB measure were currently competing in the wrong height. The Council noted a paper which provided a summary of the relevant data which had been gathered from measures undertaken for Agility Team GB.
86. Under the terms of the proposal, the existing challenge measure, which in Mr Derrett's view was not widely used and had been perceived as divisive, would be removed. A confirmation measure would be introduced, whereby all dogs would receive a confirmatory measure when they reached grade 7, or qualified for any of The Kennel Club's prestige event finals. The confirmation measures would be carried out by senior measurers and would be final and binding. Should the dog be measured into a height above that in which it was currently competing, it would move immediately into the next height.
87. In response to a query, it was confirmed that measures for Agility Team GB were carried out using a calibrated measuring stick, rather than hoops.
88. A number of concerns were raised regarding the proposal. A view was expressed that where a dog had been measured into a particular height, and the owner was competing in good faith at that height, it would be unfair for the competitor to effectively be penalised for a situation which had arisen through no fault of their own. Potentially a situation could arise where, for example, a six year old dog which had trained and competed at medium may be required to move into intermediate. This was not considered to be in the best interests of the dog.
89. It was also noted that the proposal had caused some distress among measurers, who had viewed it as inherently critical, and had found it highly discouraging. The Council was of the view that measurers should be supported and that undermining confidence in them was not helpful. Whilst it was accepted that no measuring system could be perfect, it was hoped that the current issues regarding measuring could be addressed by means of offering more training and support for measurers, with spot checks by Senior Measurers in place to ensure consistency.



90. There had also been some content on social media which had been upsetting to measurers. The need for caution when making posts on social media was emphasised.
 91. A view was also expressed that the proposal prioritised grade 7 dogs to the detriment of others. The Council considered this to be undesirable in a discipline which was highly inclusive to a wide range of people and dogs.
 92. The Council accepted that any potential mismeasuring should be addressed, but it was in agreement that adding in a further measure would not fulfil this objective, and as noted above, may cause significant welfare concerns. A suggestion was made that it may be helpful to carry out a full review of the measuring system in order to clearly identify any issues, and to consider constructive ways in which they may be addressed. This may potentially include regular re-assessment of measurers, possibly on a three yearly basis. It was agreed that Mrs Gardner, together with the Governance Panel, would consider the matter further, and would report back to the Council at its next meeting with its recommendations.
 93. A vote took place regarding the proposal, and by a large majority, it was not recommended for approval.
- Proposed amendment to Regulation H1(B)5a.(6)
94. The Council considered a proposal which was submitted by Mr Tait, who wished it to consider an amendment to the above regulation. The proposal was made in the interests of consistency and clarity. The main premise was that all weave faults should be classed as refusals, and dogs must complete the weaves from the first pole to the last in one continuous movement.
 95. Under the terms of the proposed amendment, the revised regulation would state: 'The dog to enter the weaving poles with the first pole adjacent to its left side. Each incorrect entry to be classed as a refusal—further error classed as a refusal. The dog must return to the start of the weaves on each error —failure to complete correctly before negotiating any further obstacle, elimination. Handlers may be asked to move onto the next obstacle after 3 failed attempts.'
 96. Mr Tait noted that weaves were currently the only piece of equipment where five faults could result in elimination when the dog moved onto another piece of equipment. Ensuring that dogs returned to the start of the weaves would make marking easier and clearer for judges, and would bring marking of weaves into line with the way in which other equipment was marked.
 97. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Bostock.
 98. There was some concern that the proposed amendment may cause some difficulties for the handler who would need to watch the judge in order to see if they had been faulted or eliminated.
 99. It was pointed out that clarification had previously been provided to state that where a dog made an error, it should be either put back into the weave poles at the point at which it had made the error, or should be returned to the beginning of the obstacle. The proposed new regulation would require dogs to be returned to the beginning.
 100. A vote took place, and the proposal was not recommended for approval.

ITEM 9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Review of Agility Certificates

101. The discussion item was submitted by Mr Derrett, and was presented by Mr Ellis.



102. Mr Derrett noted that in all disciplines of The Kennel Club, the Championship Certificate was regarded as the highest accolade, showcasing the very best dogs. For many agility handlers this was the most sought-after achievement in the UK and the Championship at Crufts was considered to be the most prestigious event in the agility calendar.
 103. However, with the rapid growth and change experienced within agility in the past ten years, Mr Derrett considered that there was a need for a review of the Agility Certificate to re-establish its place as the pinnacle of the discipline. Accordingly he wished to suggest that a working party be established in order to consider issues such as the number and allocation of Agility Certificates, venues, judging matters (including selection of judges, and high-level judges training), and course design guidelines. The objective of such a review would be to ensure high standards at championship shows.
 104. There were mixed views on the matter. It was agreed that championship classes should be of a high standard, and there were some concerns that this may not always be achieved. It was also noted that there was an intention to reduce the number of Agility Certificates available to 25 per year, but it was hoped that this may be achieved via natural wastage rather than by the removal of championship status from clubs which did not wish to relinquish it.
 105. There was also a view that such a review would be overly focussed on conditions relating to elite handlers and would benefit only a small number of competitors. Feedback indicated that there was no perception of any current concerns regarding the way in which championship classes were run, or the facilities for them. Many handlers viewed competing at championship level as being highly prestigious, and they aspired to take part. Such a review was therefore unnecessary.
 106. It was also highlighted that Field Officers would visit shows from time to time to ensure facilities were adequate and that Kennel Club regulations were being adhered to. In reply to a query it was confirmed that a Field Officer visit would normally be scheduled to take place at a particular show every five years, or where there had been a change of venue or a change of secretary, although at present there was a shortage of field officers available to fulfil these requirements.
 107. Where there was a serious concern regarding any show at which championship classes were scheduled, the office should be notified so that appropriate steps may be taken. This may for example include a visit from one of the agility specialists on the Activities Committee in order to make an assessment, if appropriate.
 108. Whilst it was agreed that there was no major issue with championship classes, and therefore no necessity for a working party to be established, the Council considered a suggestion that in the interests of maintaining high standards, it would be a positive step to include the matter in the five-year strategy, and that the Governance Panel should be requested to keep the issue under review and to carry out any research it considered necessary.
 109. A show of hands indicated support for this course of action, and it was agreed that the Governance Panel should monitor the situation and make any recommendations it considered necessary. Mr Ellis indicated his willingness to assist, if required.
- Implementation of 5m rule for the first obstacle
110. Mr Ellis, on behalf of Mrs Melville-Love, an individual, wished the Council to discuss a suggestion that Regulation H(1)(B)1.a.(3) be amended to state 'Should ring size allow, the first obstacle should be at least 5m from the edge of the ring. In circumstances where this is not possible, the judge should look at starting the dog jumping away from the course towards the edge of the ring.'



111. The matter was discussed earlier in the meeting as part of the discussion relating to the placement of leads and toys (paragraphs 49-59 refer).

Awarding of Prestige Events Qualifiers

(Mr Ellis declared an interest due to his involvement with a Listed Status club)

112. Ms F Nemeth, represented by Mr Ellis, wished the Council to review the current system of only awarding prestige qualifiers to Kennel Club registered clubs, and suggested that such events should be awarded based on a grading system taking into account a range of factors such as quality of venue facilities, competing surface, ground conditions, availability of camping, and a 'score' provided by a representative of The Kennel Club.
113. Ms Nemeth noted that many Listed Status clubs were able to offer excellent facilities but were not permitted to host qualifiers for prestige events.
114. It was also suggested that taking such a step may prove helpful in future -proofing the discipline at a time when many registered societies had aging committees and may not be in a position to continue running shows indefinitely.
115. The Council noted Ms Nemeth's views, but there was very little support for the suggestion. In particular it was highlighted that there was no shortage of registered clubs applying to hold qualifiers. Further, it was of the view that registered clubs should be supported as much as possible, particularly as such clubs often provided training facilities for grass roots competitors which were not always available from listed status clubs.
116. One suggestion was made that the allocation of qualifiers should be open to a regional review, and that a qualifier may be awarded to a listed status club only if there was no registered club in the area wishing to apply.
117. However, after a brief discussion, the consensus among the Council was that the status quo should remain in place whereby only registered clubs may hold qualifiers. The discussion item was therefore not supported.

ITEM 10. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

118. A written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held at Rutland Showground from 11-14 August 2022, was noted.
119. Some disappointment was expressed at the removal of the British Open final competition from Crufts in 2022, and that there had been no prior consultation with the agility community. Whilst noting this, the Council acknowledged that The Kennel Club was free to run its own events as it saw fit.

ITEM 11. AGILITY TEAM GB

120. The Council noted press releases which were issued on 4 April 2022 and 7 April 2022 regarding the selection of Agility Team GB members who would represent the UK at the Junior Open Agility World Championships in Finland from 14-17 July, the European Open Agility Championships in Belgium from 28-31 July, and the FCI Agility World Championships in Austria from 21-25 September.



ITEM 12. STRATEGY DOCUMENT

121. The Council noted a draft document formulated by the office in conjunction with Mr M Hallam, which set out strategic objectives for the Council together with proposed action points and time frames. Three major items had been included and it was hoped that more could be added, with the document being regularly updated in line with the Council's activities, decisions, and objectives.
122. All Council members were requested to review the document with a view to the addition of further items at the next meeting. Any such items should be clearly defined and achievable, and should include relevant timeframes.
123. In the meantime, the document would be updated as appropriate to include any relevant matters which had been discussed during the course of the meeting.
124. **Item a. Support the development of judges/managing expectations of judges from show organisers**
It was noted that the reference to the apparent bullying of judges had been added earlier in the year, and that as discussed earlier, it appeared that the practice had now become less prevalent.
125. **Item b. Quality of competition across all shows**
A query was raised regarding the wording 'To review the impact increased numbers of shows is having on the overall quality of agility competition.' It was clarified that the item referred to the number of competitions in some areas and whether this was resulting in competitors being too thinly spread between shows, leading to low class numbers and a potential reduction in the standard of competition. It was noted that this issue had been discussed on previous occasions, and the Council had not been able to identify a solution, noting that it was not possible to place any restriction on the number of shows held. Market forces would generally apply and competitors would select the shows they wished to attend.
126. A concern was raised in regard to the way in which licences were issued. As noted earlier in the meeting (paragraph 68 refers), licences may be applied for up to six weeks prior to the date of the show, which had caused some issues with clashing shows. The Council was reminded that the timeframe had been amended during the Covid-19 pandemic but as the reduced timeframe had appeared to be working well, it had been retained. A suggestion was made that the application process should be amended to require show organisers to submit more detail, and that conditions should apply such as a requirement for a set percentage of judges to be in place before a licence would be granted. This suggestion was noted but no further action was agreed.
- Additional items
127. **Safeguarding:** a suggestion was made that safeguarding be added to the document. It was noted that guidance was available from The Kennel Club website and that the office was continuing to monitor concerns. Whilst there was some merit in appointing a safeguarding officer at a show, it was noted that this was not, in itself, a complete solution. Some children would be reluctant to approach such an individual. Whilst guidance was available, parents were reminded that ultimately, they were responsible for ensuring the safety of their children.
128. **Measuring:** The Council was in full agreement that ensuring there was an adequate number of measurers with sufficiently wide geographical coverage, and ensuring that dogs were measured accurately into the correct classification should be added to the document.



129. **Results database:** It was noted that the development of the database was in backlog for CRM development. No time frame was available at present.
130. **Timeframe:** Noting that the term of the Council was three years, it was suggested that the five year timeframe was not appropriate, and it was agreed that it should be titled as a strategy document with no specified timeframe.

ITEM 13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Appointment to Panels

131. At its previous meeting, the Council had appointed individual members to the three Panels. Noting that Mrs Gardner should be appointed to the Judging Panel, it was agreed that additional appointments may be dealt with via email following the meeting.

Incident Book

132. The Council noted concerns in respect of the way in which Incident Books were being used. It appeared that not all show organisers were fully aware of the way in which these should be used.
133. The Council noted a briefing paper which had been prepared by Mrs Hawkswell and circulated to Council members prior to the meeting. The document outlined some of the issues and possible solutions:
- Many show organisers were not aware of how the Incident Book should be used but currently there was no enforcement process in place for incorrect use
 - There should be more content regarding the Incident Book in the H Regulations examination
 - Show organisers should face consequences should they refuse to allow a competitor to make a report in the Incident Book
 - Formatting should be reviewed to make the Incident Book more user-friendly, with particular reference to providing adequate space within boxes
 - Nil returns should be submitted
134. It was highlighted by the office that the Incident Book should be used to record any incidents or circumstances which were unusual or unexpected, such as injuries to dogs or people, dogs out of control, complaints etc. The office would note all such reports, whether or not they were marked by the show organiser as having been resolved at the show. Serious incidents would be followed up by the office (even if resolved at the show), and repeat incidents involving the same competitor or the same dog would also be followed up.
135. The Council was also advised that the level of detail should reflect the nature of the incident, and it was not necessary for all boxes to be completed. For example, details of witnesses would not be required in the case of a competitor having a fall. However, in the case of an altercation between two dogs, details of witnesses should be provided. It was not necessary for the show secretary to obtain statements as these would be requested as appropriate by the office as part of its investigation.
136. It was also noted that incidents may be reported directly to The Kennel Club following a show, even if not noted within the Incident Book. Such reports must be lodged within seven days of the show.
137. In respect of concerns regarding equipment, it was noted that a form was available on the Kennel Club website for use by judges. However this should only be used in respect of equipment issues.



138. It was highlighted that an objection fee of £35 was only required in the case of an allegation that a breach of regulation had taken place. Payment of a fee was not required where a report was made regarding a dog being out of control.

139. The office was thanked for providing the above guidance in respect of the Incident Book.

ITEM 14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

140. The date of the Council's next meeting would be announced in September 2022.

The meeting closed at 4.20 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'