



THE KENNEL CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 27 JANUARY 2022 AT 10.30 AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Note: the meeting had originally been scheduled to take place at Clarges St., London, but in view of Government advice relating to Covid-19, it was held remotely.

PRESENT

Mrs E Bostock	South East / East Anglia
Mr A Dornford-Smith	Northern Ireland
Mr N Ellis	Midlands
Mr M Hallam	North West
Mrs S Hawkswell	Scotland
Mr P Hinchley	South / South West
Mrs E Laing-Kay	North East
Mr K Smith	North East
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
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.

ITEM 1. PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL ON KENNEL CLUB STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

1. The Council received a presentation from the office on The Kennel Club and Liaison Council structure and procedures, and the role of Council representatives.
2. The office was thanked for an informative presentation, and was requested to circulate a copy to all Council members.
3. In response to a query, it was confirmed that only the outcomes of votes which took place at meetings of the Council would be included in the minutes, and that details of the number of votes in favour or against a proposal would not be published other than stating if a vote was carried unanimously, or by a majority. Under the terms of collective responsibility, Council members should not disclose details of how individual members had voted.
4. It was also highlighted that representatives were not obliged to vote as requested by their areas, but may vote as they saw fit, having taken into account all points raised during consideration of a proposal or a discussion item.



THE KENNEL CLUB

5. Noting that the Council reported directly to the Activities Committee, a query was raised regarding the way in which the Committee was made up. It was confirmed that each of the activities disciplines was represented by at least one member of the relevant liaison council or working party, together with representatives elected by The Kennel Club's Associate Members and others elected directly by The Kennel Club Board.

ITEM 2. TO ELECT A CHAIR FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

6. Following an election process carried out by email prior to the meeting, Mr Hallam and Mr Tait were nominated and seconded for the role. A ballot took place and Mr Hallam was elected as Chair for the term of the Council. Mr Hallam thanked the Council for its support.

IN THE CHAIR MR M HALLAM

ITEM 3. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIR FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

7. Following an election process carried out by email prior to the meeting, Mrs Hawkswell and Mr Tait were nominated and seconded for the role. A ballot took place and Mrs Hawkswell was elected as Vice Chair for the term of the Council.

ITEM 4. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE EFFECTIVE FROM JUNE 2022 TO MAY 2025

8. Nominations were received for Mr Smith and Mr Ellis for the role of the Council's representative onto the Activities Committee for the above term of office. Following a ballot, Mr Ellis was elected to the role.

ITEM 5. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

9. The Council was reminded that Mr Tait was the current Council representative on the Sub-Group, which was cross-disciplinary in nature and made up of representatives from all activities disciplines and field trials, together with scientists and individuals with relevant scientific or veterinary expertise. Mr Tait confirmed his willingness to continue in the role, with the proviso that should another representative wish to take on the role in the future he would be willing to stand down. There being no other nominations, Mr Tait was duly elected to the role.

ITEM 6. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB GROUP FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

10. It was noted that the representative must be an Accredited Trainer. One nomination was received for the role, for the above period of office, and Mr Hinchley was duly elected.



ITEM 7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

11. Apologies were received from Miss R Sargent.
12. New members Mrs Bostock, Mr Ellis, and Mr Hinchley were welcomed to the meeting.

ITEM 8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

13. The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021 were approved.

ITEM 9. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The Council noted that the Board, at its meeting on 12 October 2021, approved the following amendments to H Regulations:

Regulation H(1)9.a.

TO:

- a. Test area shall have a suitable surface and measure a minimum of 32m x 32m for outdoor venues ~~rings~~. ~~Indoor venues may be smaller but must be appropriate to the size of the test.~~ **Indoor rings are recommended to be 600 square meters but must be a minimum of 450 square metres with no one side measuring less than 15m. For outdoor all weather arenas of one or more rings that are enclosed by structure, fence or permanent barrier each ring is recommended to be 800 square meters but must be a minimum of 600 square metres with no one side measuring less than 20m. All indoor and outdoor all weather permanently enclosed rings for Prestige Events and/or Championship classes must be a minimum of 800 square metres with no one side measuring less than 20m. The ring area includes space for officials, including the scime and ring party, but where possible the ring tent should be outside the ring area.**

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2022)

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

TO:

Long Jump—Each unit a minimum length of 1.2m.

Large Dogs - to comprise ~~3 to 5~~ **5** units, the overall length to be between ~~1.2m~~ **1.3m** and 1.5m. The height of the front unit to be 127mm and the height of the rear unit to be 381mm.

Intermediate Dogs – to comprise ~~3 to 5~~ **4** units, the overall length to be between 1m and ~~1.3m~~ **1.2m**. The height of the front unit to be 127mm and the height of the rear unit to be ~~381mm~~ **305mm**.

Medium Dogs - to comprise ~~3 to 4~~ **3** units, the overall length to be between 700mm and 900mm. The height of the front unit to be 127mm and the height of the rear unit to be ~~305mm~~ **229mm**.

Small Dogs - To comprise ~~2 to 3~~ **2** units, the overall length to be between 400mm and ~~500mm~~ **600mm**. The height of the front unit to be 127mm and the height of the rear unit to be ~~229mm~~ **170mm**.

Marker poles with a minimum height of 1.2m shall be used, these should not be attached to any part of the obstacle.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold.)

(Effective 1 January 2022)

Minimum standards for Competition Managers/Chief Stewards

15. At its previous meeting, the Council had discussed a recommendation from the Activities Judges Sub-Group that as there were currently no regulations specifying a minimum standard for Competition Managers for agility, such standards should be introduced for the discipline.



16. Although in agreement with the principle of setting clear and specific criteria for the role, the Council had concluded that there should be a clearer definition of the precise role and responsibilities of the competition manager, and that until this was in place, it would not be helpful to introduce a regulation which set specific criteria for the role.
17. It noted the wording included in the draft of the revised Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards, which defined the role of the Competition Manager, and stated that:

'To carry out these duties effectively the Competition Manager must be completely impartial, have a good understanding of H Regulations, and be able to identify potential issues on a course which may compromise the safety of handlers or dog.'
18. It was highlighted that the role of a Competition Manager was a key one, however under the terms of the H Regulations, he or she may not enter a dog or compete at a show at which they were carrying out the role. As a result some societies experienced difficulties in appointing a Competition Manager as many suitably qualified individuals were keen to compete and were not willing to undertake the role. In some cases this resulted in the Competition Manager named on the schedule being an individual with very little knowledge or experience, although it was acknowledged that a person who had never competed in agility may still be capable of fulfilling the role in an effective manner.
19. In response to a question, it was confirmed that most other disciplines had specific regulations in place which covered the role of a Competition Manager or Chief Steward, and clearly defined what experience and knowledge he or she should have.
20. The Council accepted that it may be problematic to allow a Competition Manager to compete, as doing so would not allow them to be sufficiently impartial, and further, they may be distracted from giving their full attention to their responsibilities, which would require them to be available at all times.
21. There was also an alternative view that preventing a Competition Manager from competing may preclude some qualified individuals from undertaking the role, although the Council acknowledged that it was unlikely that any proposal to change the relevant regulation would be accepted.
22. A suggestion was made that, 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.
23. Noting the mixed views on the issue, it was agreed that the Governance Panel should consider the matter further, with a view to formulating a set of criteria to be met collectively by the show management team, but with ultimate responsibility resting with the appointed Competition Manager. A firm proposal would be submitted to the Council at its next meeting.

ITEM 10. ACCREDITED TRAINERS' ANNUAL SEMINAR

24. The Council noted a written report submitted by Mr Huckle following the above seminar which took place on 26 October 2021.



25. In particular it was highlighted that the office was in the process of arranging assessments of candidates who had applied for the role of Accredited Trainer for agility. The office confirmed that it would also be re-advertising the role in the near future, and any new applications would be welcomed. [**Afternote:** a press release inviting applications was issued on 2 February 2022.]

ITEM 11. REVIEW OF PANELS

26. The Council reviewed the use of the Panel system, which had been established in order to progress specific matters. Under the system, each Panel would carry out work in between Council meetings, with some tasks allocated to specific individuals, and recommendations then referred to the Council. It was agreed that the Panel system was effective and should continue over the Council's forthcoming term of office.
27. The Council then went on to review and update the membership, roles, and remits of the following Panels. These were confirmed as follows:

Equipment Panel

Remit:

The Equipment Panel acts as an advisory group on matters related to agility equipment. It will:

- Review any new equipment for Kennel Club approval prior to use
- Review any modifications of design or materials for equipment currently in use for Kennel Club approval prior to introduction of modified design
- Review currently approved equipment to ensure specifications are still relevant in today's agility arena
- Consider concerns raised by the agility community in relation to equipment
- Monitor equipment issues raised in incident books
- Hold discussions with equipment manufacturers
- Report to the Council at meetings

Membership:

Mr K Smith (Chair)

Mr N Ellis

Mr M Hallam

Miss R Sargent

Agility Governance Panel

Remit:

- Review existing regulations and guidelines to identify areas where improved clarity, review or consolidation is needed and bring these to the Council for consultation
- Improve communications with show management, clubs, judges and competitors and assist The Kennel Club in providing a one-stop source of information on Kennel Club Agility
- Consider ways in which the Council could be more effective, specifically with regard to liaison with the agility community, coordination with Kennel Club office staff and its relationship within The Kennel Club decision making structure.

Membership:

Mrs S Hawkswell (Chair)

Mrs E Bostock

Miss R Sargent

Mr K Smith

Mr M Tait



Judging Panel

Remit:

- To look at ways of helping and supporting judges in all aspects of the role of being a judge
- To regularly assess and update all literature pertaining to judges
- To review any incidents sent to The Kennel Club/Scottish Kennel Club regarding judges and judging
- To support and pass on ideas on how to improve judges' training and mentoring.
- To give feedback to the Activities Judges Sub-Group

Membership:

Mr N Ellis

Mr M Hallam

Mrs S Hawkswell

Mr P Hinchley

Mrs E Laing-Kay

Mr M Tait

(chair to be decided by the Panel in due course)

ITEM 12. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

28. The Council noted a written report from Mr Tait following the Sub-Group's meeting on 16 September 2021. A number of issues were highlighted and discussed.

A-frame

29. The Council was advised that research had been carried out regarding the scale and the long jump used in working trials. A query had been raised with the researchers and the Sub-Group as to whether the results from this research could be transferred to relate to the angle of ascent onto the A-frame in agility, and the resulting impact forces. It was confirmed that it would not be possible to extrapolate relevant data from the working trials research but that a separate project would be required for each of the two obstacles, as the way in which they were approached by dogs was very different.
30. The Council was requested to consider whether it would support research into impact forces on the A-frame. It was noted that the A-frame used in Sweden had recently been reduced in height as a safety measure, with adequate notice being given to handlers to provide an opportunity for any necessary re-training for dogs used to negotiating the obstacle at its original height.
31. It was noted that not all dogs approached the obstacle in the same manner, with larger or heavier dogs often being trained to approach in a very controlled manner in order to achieve the up contact. It was suggested that removal of the up contact may result in dogs approaching the obstacle with increased speed and therefore greater force.
32. It was also highlighted that the distance between the preceding obstacle and the A-frame had an effect on the way in which dogs approached it, and there was some concern that a dog building up speed would impact the A-frame with increased force.
33. Having considered the matter, the Council expressed its support for the suggested research on impact forces acting on a dog with the A-frame at its current height, and at a reduced height, in order to ascertain an optimum angle of approach. However it would be necessary to focus on a clear objective for any such research, the way in which the results would be used, and the potential implications for the discipline. The Council was assured that the intention of the research would be to provide data which would help to decide the safest way to use equipment in a way which minimised any potential welfare concerns.



Collapsible tunnel

34. A query was raised as to the use of the collapsible tunnel in European competitions. It was confirmed that whilst its use was currently permitted, it was only used minimally, and that it would be removed from the list of obstacles from 1 January 2023.

Fitness research

35. The Council noted that Sub-Group representatives for agility, working trials, and heelwork to music had all confirmed their support for proposed heart rate research, noting the importance of fitness and good body condition of dogs competing in any discipline. It had not been determined exactly how fitness would be defined, but this would be considered as part of the methodology.
36. It was noted that the research would be relevant to all disciplines and that it would be used to provide baseline information on heart rates, which was not currently available, and which could be used to develop educational tools to assist dog owners.

See-saw

37. The Sub-Group had agreed that Dr Doyle and Dr Wills would liaise to progress research on absorption of forces on the see-saw, which would be suitable for a student at Hartpury. However, it had noted that there had been difficulties in experimental data collection due to Covid-19, it was hoped the research would be able to proceed in the near future.

Opportunities for investigation

38. It was noted that a list of opportunities for investigation was maintained by the Sub-Group. Mr Tait undertook to provide Council representatives with a list of those relating to agility.

Funding for research projects

39. The Council noted that a small budget had been allocated by The Kennel Club to the Sub-Group in order to fund research projects, but no decisions had been made as to how this would be used.
40. It was noted that the 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. The views of the Council were sought as to whether it would support the introduction of such a levy.
41. Some queries were raised into the way in which such funding would be used, and as to how funds would be shared between disciplines. In particular it was noted that agility was a sizeable discipline and would therefore be a prime contributor, and it was suggested that this should be taken into account in any consideration as to how funds were used.
42. There was some support for the levy if it was optional, rather than being mandatory, and provided there was complete transparency as to its use.
43. It was noted that the original suggestion had related solely to the use of funding for scientific research projects, but some representatives were of the view that it would not be appropriate to restrict its use in this way, and that consideration should be given to the allocation of some funding for the overall improvement of agility.
44. Having considered the matter, the Council was not of the view that any final decision could be made without further clarification as the way in which the levy would be made, and how funds would be used. However, a show of hands indicated a small majority in favour of the general principle of the levy, for use in research projects, subject to such clarification being provided.



45. The Sub-Group would be informed of the Council's view, and would consider the matter further taking this into account, together with the views expressed by other disciplines. It would then make recommendations as to whether or not the matter should be progressed further. It was clarified that any recommendations from the Sub-Group would be subject to approval by the Dog Health Group, and ultimately by the Board.
46. Further, it was agreed that the potential imposition of a levy to be used for other purposes should be considered by the Governance Panel, and its views would be referred to the Council at its next meeting.

ITEM 13. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL

47. The Council noted a written report from the Equipment Panel and discussed issues arising from it.

Review of Equipment

48. It was noted that the Panel would be holding a review of obstacles, with an initial discussion taking place at the Council's meeting in July 2022. The agility community was invited to submit any items for consideration. These should be with the Panel by the end of March 2022. A discussion on specific changes to be taken forward would take place in January 2023, with formal proposals considered at the Council's meeting in July 2023.

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(B)3.j.

49. At its meeting held on 11 February 2021 the Council agreed to change the number of weaves to be 6 or 12 with a maximum of 12 in a standard class. At this meeting it was also suggested that if the proposal on tolerances was approved a single diameter of 35mm should be recommended.
50. At its meeting in July 2021, the Council was advised that the Activities Committee, at its meeting on 18 March 2021, had noted the above proposal which specified the number of poles which may be used in a standard class. It had accepted the principle of the recommendation, however, it had noted that the Council would be considering separately whether there was any necessity to amend the dimension size of weave poles. As the regulation also contained dimensions relating to the size of weave poles, it was agreed that it would be preferable to make a single amendment to cover both issues rather than two separate amendments. Accordingly, consideration of the proposal was deferred by the Committee until the Council had discussed the matter further.
51. As Regulation H(1)(B)3 had been amended to allow 5mm tolerance (with effect from 1 January 2022) the Equipment Panel recommended a diameter of 35mm for weave poles, and proposed the following amendment to Regulation H(1)(B)3.j. The amendment was seconded by Mr Tait.
52. A brief discussion took place as to potential difficulties for clubs to source poles of the correct diameter, but it was accepted that this should not be problematic as there would be a tolerance of 5mm, which would allow for the use of poles of between 30-40mm diameter. It was also confirmed that the regulation should refer to the number of poles in a standard class, noting that championship classes were considered to be standard classes and were not special classes.
53. A vote took place, and the Council was unanimous in **recommending** the following amendment for approval:

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 pole.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)

ITEM 14. REPORT FROM THE AGILITY GOVERNANCE PANEL

54. The Council considered a report from the Agility Governance Panel and discussed a number of issues arising from it.

Measuring

55. The Council noted that approximately 150 people had responded to an advertisement for new measurers, and that these applications were being processed by the office. However, there had been delays in doing so due to staffing issues. The applications were now being processed as a matter of priority and it was hoped that assessments of candidates would be carried out in the near future.
56. In view of the shortage of measurers, as a result of which some competitors had been unable to get their dogs measured and therefore could not compete, a request was made that the moratorium, which had been introduced as a result of Covid-19, on measuring be reinstated. The office confirmed however that this would not be possible as all relaxations of regulations which had been implemented to assist during the Covid-19 pandemic had now been removed.
57. It was highlighted that there were particular issues in Northern Ireland, where no previous measurers in the area wished to be re-assessed and there were currently no measurers, although there had been applications from new candidates.
58. In order to address the immediate problem, it was agreed that arrangements would be made as soon as possible for two measurers to travel to Northern Ireland for a measurers' training session.
59. The office's attention was drawn to the list of measurers available on The Kennel Club's website, which was out of date and required an update. The office undertook to address this.
60. There was a concern regarding incorrect advice which had been given to competitors stating that unregistered dogs may be measured, and it appeared that some measurers had measured unregistered dogs. The source of this advice was unclear, and it was clarified that a dog must be registered prior to being measured. Guidance had already been posted on social media to this effect, and the office also undertook to contact all measurers via email to ensure that they were aware of the correct procedure.
61. A suggestion was made that the Kennel Club Code of Best Practice for Measuring Agility Dog Heights should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it was up to date.

Grading Review

62. The Panel was in the process of collating data on grade changes with a view to understanding how quickly dogs were progressing through the new grades. Meaningful data would not be available until a full year had passed. The Council would be kept informed.

Course Time Matrix



63. In 2022 data would be collected to enable the Panel to look further at the course time matrix, how it was being applied and how it related to the performance times of dogs in different grades. This would allow for analysis and consideration as to whether the matrix required review, or whether amended guidance to judges was required.

Other priorities

64. The Panel reported that it would also be carrying out the following, when it was possible to do so:
- Review of the governance of agility within The Kennel Club
 - Development of a Kennel Club agility results database
 - Reviewing scope of guidelines and regulations.
65. A query was raised as to whether a seminar should be scheduled in the near future, possibly on an online basis, for organisers of agility shows, as such a seminar had not taken place for some time. It was agreed that this matter should be progressed with the office.

ITEM 15. REPORT FROM THE JUDGING PANEL AND OTHER JUDGING ISSUES

66. The Council considered a report from the Judging Panel and discussed issues arising from it. The report included an update following the meeting of the Activities Judges Sub-Group which took place on 18 November 2021.

67. The main issues highlighted were as follows:

Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards

68. The Council noted the revised Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards which had been drafted by the Panel, and which now incorporated the Guide to Agility Equipment which had previously been a separate document. The document had been reviewed by the Activities Judges Sub-Group which had been of the view that it was an excellent piece of work and that its high standard reflected the effort which had gone into its formulation, and the input from a number of people.
69. The Panel, and especially Mrs Hawkswell, were congratulated by the Council on producing an excellent document, which had involved considerable effort. It was suggested that more illustrations in future editions may be helpful to support the regulations referred to in the document, and it was agreed that this would be a positive step.
70. As soon as a finalised version was available, it would be placed on The Kennel Club's website.
71. It was emphasised by the Panel that the entire Guide should be subject to review in October/November each year, and that in particular the section relating to the equipment guide must be subject to careful review each year to ensure that it took into account any changes made during the previous year, and any new regulations due to come into force the following January.

Qualifications and skill of agility judges

72. The Panel wished to raise concerns regarding the mentoring scheme for agility judges. Mentoring was an important part of the development process for judges, and may become mandatory in the future, but it appeared that there were some administrative issues with the optional scheme at present, as a result of which it was not being used constructively.
73. The office confirmed that only a few requests for mentoring were currently being received. It was suggested that the number of requests, and the number of mentoring appointments being



carried out, should be monitored. It was confirmed that the office did maintain some records, but it was hoped that when a new member of staff was in place, he or she would be able to take a pro-active role in managing the mentoring process and would be able to supply such details. It would also be important to ensure that an accurate and up-to-date list of mentors was available.

74. A query was also raised as to the accuracy of information regarding Championship judges which was available via The Kennel Club's website. It was highlighted that should a judge be aware of an error in their contact details, or should they wish to be removed from the list, they could submit an online form or could email the office at agility@thekennelclub.org.uk requesting any amendments, or removal.
75. The Council noted the Panel's intention to liaise with the office over the course of 2022 to ensure that the mentoring scheme could be run as smoothly and effectively as possible.

Recruitment and retention of judges

76. The Panel wished to highlight its concerns at the number of judges who were retiring from judging. It was acknowledged that there were a number of reasons for this, but in some cases the new requirement for judges to have passed the online Regulations and Judging Procedure examination within the last five years was a factor, as some judges did not wish to do so. The Panel was keen to monitor the situation and to conduct a review of existing judges, when they had last taken the examination, and whether they still wished to accept judging appointments.
77. The Council was advised by the office that due to the provisions of GDPR legislation, it was not possible for a list of those judges who had passed the examination to be published. It was noted that at a later stage of development of the CRM system, it may be possible to offer a facility for judges to add their details to a list, although this was not definite.
78. The Panel undertook to consult with the office as to ways in which it could obtain the information it required in order to carry out an analysis of the number of judges wishing to retire, and their reasons for doing so.

Activities Judges Sub-Group Report

Online Regulations and Judging Procedure examination

79. As a result of the new regulation which came into effect on 1 January 2022, it was anticipated that there would be a high number of candidates wishing to take the online examination. It was confirmed that the bank of questions had now been updated to reflect current regulations. Relevant changes would also be made in due course to online film content.
80. In response to a query it was confirmed that there were no plans to make any charge to judges taking the online examination.

ITEM 16. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

81. No proposals had been received.

ITEM 17. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Electronic Contacts

82. Mr Cavill, represented by Mr Hinchley, wished the Council to discuss the use of electronic contacts in Kennel Club competitions. Mr Cavill noted that the currently manufactured electronic contacts would provide an inaudible indicator to the judge, via a buzzer device attached to the wrist, that the contact had been touched. The judge was not expected to rely



solely on the electronic activation of the contact and would still be required to visually confirm that the contact had been touched. It was not intended that the use of such devices would be mandatory.

83. It was understood that remote electronic contact equipment was readily available from at least two manufacturers.
84. However there was some concern regarding reliability, and a query was raised as to whether there was any available data on this issue. It appeared that such data was not currently available.
85. A suggestion was made that a pilot study or a data-gathering exercise would prove helpful, and it was agreed that the Equipment Panel and the Judges Panel would jointly carry out further research, and would provide a report to the Council at its next meeting.
86. A show of hands took place, which indicated the Council's unanimous support for the principle of 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.
Head Judge – Roles and Remit
87. Mr Ellis presented the discussion item on behalf of Mr Cavill who noted that the concept of a head judge at agility competitions had been the subject of discussion within the agility community for a number of years.
88. Mr Cavill was of the view that there was a requirement at shows for a better understanding of the rules and regulations, but also noted that there was some debate as to whether there were different skill sets involved in competing in agility, and in running a show. He wished to suggest that the concept of the head judge would bridge this gap, on the basis that he or she would be a recognised judge with relevant experience and knowledge. Mr Cavill's submission to the Council included detail as to the proposed remit of the head judge, which would mainly consist of assisting and advising judges and show management teams. He or she would not review or assess course plans before the show (unless specifically requested to do so by an individual judge), or impose any course changes or judging decisions.
89. It was acknowledged that there was some crossover with the discussion which had taken place earlier in the meeting regarding the role of the Competition Manager.
90. There were mixed views on the suggestion of a Head Judge, with some representatives being of the opinion that a collaborative approach, as discussed earlier in relation to the Competition Manager's role, would be preferable. There were also some concerns that a judge may not welcome advice from a named head judge but may prefer to seek advice, if needed, from another individual of his or her own choice. Unsolicited or unwelcome advice may in fact have a negative impact on a judge rather than being of benefit.
91. It was also unclear what the criteria would be for the role of Head Judge, and there were some concerns as to whether judges would wish to undertake the role.
92. Mr Ellis thanked the Council for its feedback but was concerned that there may be some misunderstanding around the purpose of the role, which was intended to provide a source of mediation for any issues relating specifically to judging, and to provide support and encouragement for judges. However if the suggestion was not supported, it was hoped that other measures could be taken to help judges improve their performance by means of improvements to judges' training, mentoring, etc.



93. Whilst it was accepted that there were current issues in relation to judging, the Council was not of the view that the introduction of a head judge role was the best way to address them, although societies were free to appoint a Head Judge should they wish to do so.
94. A show of hands took place and by a large majority, the Council was not in favour of progressing the matter further.

Placement of leads and rewards

95. Mr Cavill, represented by Mr Hinchley, wished the agility community and the Council to discuss 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.
96. There had been considerable discussion via social media on this issue over a long period of time and various practices were currently in use. However there had been cases of dog-to-dog incidents occurring in or around exit areas, and it was hoped that a way could be identified of preventing these. The suggestion was 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.
97. There was some support for the suggestion, although there was a concern that there may be logistical issues in setting safe zones at some venues, especially those indoors, due to lack of space. It was also suggested that the careful placement of start and finish obstacles could also be instrumental in reducing the potential for incidents, for example setting a minimum distance from the final obstacle to the edge of the ring so as to allow time for dogs to be under control prior to exiting the ring. Alternatively, a course could be set whereby the line from the final obstacle did not constitute a straight run towards the exit.
98. Having discussed the matter, the Council was fully in agreement that the suggestion warranted more detailed consideration as to how it may be implemented, and whether guidance or a suitable regulation would be more appropriate. It agreed that the Judging Panel should consider how best it may be progressed, and that a proposal would be submitted to the Council at its next meeting.

Number of runs to be judged in a day

99. Mr Tait drew the Council's attention to 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.' Mr Tait wished to highlight that in the current climate of smaller class sizes, this may have a major impact on the length of day a judge is in the ring. Accordingly, he requested that the Council discuss the potential introduction of a sliding scale which would take the number of classes into account, for example:
- 1-3 classes 400-450 dogs
 - 3-5 classes 350-400 dogs
 - 5-8 classes 300 -350 dogs
 - 8 classes plus max 300 dogs.
100. The Council was understanding of the rationale supporting the discussion item, and accepted that there had been cases of judges being required to judge a number of classes over a very long number of hours, which was not desirable.
101. There was some concern that implementing a maximum number of dogs per day may mean that more judges were required, which may be problematic, especially in geographically remote areas. Noting such regional differences, it was accepted that it would be difficult to impose mandatory maximums. However the Council was supportive of the idea of providing strong guidance, but show organisers would retain discretion as to the number of classes and the allocation of judges, as circumstances would vary from show to show. For example, a longer



timescale would be necessary for four classes with a different course in each, whereas four classes all with the same course would take up less time. It was also highlighted that judges were not obliged to accept appointments for a high number of classes on one day.

102. The Council was in full agreement with 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. The issue was referred to the Judging Panel for further consideration as to how it may be progressed, and a proposal would be provided to the Council at its next meeting.

Recommended minimum course walking time

103. Mr Tait requested that the Council consider the introduction of a recommended minimum time for course walking of 15 minutes, which would allow competitors adequate time to get to a ring, even if they were at some distance away from it, or to get a message to the ring. Noting that in some instances, especially at shows where there were a number of small classes, course walking times were very short, Mr Tait was of the view that introducing a minimum time would provide a consistent approach for all competitors, and that it would reduce frustration and complaints. He wished to suggest that this could be implemented via guidance rather than any regulatory change.
104. Although understanding of the intent, the Council expressed some concerns that a minimum course walking time could have a considerable impact on some shows in that it would lengthen the time taken to complete judging of all classes in a ring. It was of the view that judges should be reasonable when setting course walking times and ensure that they allowed an adequate amount of time, and that competitors should take responsibility for ensuring that they were present at the ring at the correct time, or for communicating with the ring party.
105. It was noted that the revised Guide for Agility Judges and Stewards contained updated guidance relating to course walking times, as follows:
- 'Judges should ensure that they allow an appropriate time for course walking that takes in to account the number of competitors needing to walk the course, any clashing classes, and the layout of the venue.
It is good practice to make sure that the start time for each class is communicated to competitors when the course is ready for walking.'
106. After due consideration, a show of hands indicated that there was no support for progressing the discussion item further.

Bitches in season competing at Kennel Club prestigious invitational events

107. Ms J Paige 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 discussion item was presented on Ms Paige's behalf by Mr Tait.
108. Ms Paige was of the view that not allowing bitches in season to compete in such events was disappointing for handlers, often after considerable effort being made to qualify. Further, excluding them and inviting reserves to take their place meant that the best dogs were not being showcased. Ms Paige also highlighted that bitches in season were allowed to compete in many overseas competitions and that there was no evidence of any negative impact on other competitors.
109. Initially allowing this provision at invitational events would mean the number of bitches affected would be minimal, but would allow handlers to plan their training with confidence and that their achievements would result in them being able to compete in a prestige event should they have qualified to do so.



110. A view was expressed that some handlers of male dogs may be concerned at the potential for distraction, but the majority were in broad support of the principle, noting Ms Paige's comments regarding the disappointment of handlers who had qualified for a prestigious competition but were not able to compete.
111. It was noted that it had been custom and practice for bitches in season competing at overseas events to run last, but this was no longer always the case and at some competitions such bitches were permitted to run in their normal running order.
112. A show of hands indicated the Council's support, by a majority, for the principle of the discussion item, and it was agreed that the Governance Panel would consider how it may be progressed, in conjunction with Ms Paige.

ITEM 18. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL

113. The Council noted 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.
114. The main points were as follows:
 - The sponsorship arrangement with Skinner's would come to an end after Crufts 2022 and the company would no longer be providing sponsorship for the Festival.
 - The schedule would go live early April.
 - First Place Processing would be handling all IAF entries as well as the live results at the show.
 - First Contact would be the equipment supplier for all rings.

ITEM 19. AGILITY TEAM GB

115. The Council noted a report on the activities of Agility Team GB, the main points of which were as follows:
 - All three 2021 Championships (Junior Open Agility World Championships, European Open Championships and Agility World Championships) were unfortunately cancelled due to Covid-19.
 - Plans for Agility Team GB try-out events were underway for 2022, and would be held on the following dates:
 - Open Showcase – 18-20 February
 - Senior PSQ – 25-26 February
 - Junior PSQ – 27 February
 - European Open Try-out – 19-20 March
 - Agility World Championships and Junior Open Agility World Championships Try-out – 26-27 March
 - Team Day – 23 April
 - European Open and Junior Open Agility World Championships team day – 30 May
 - Agility World Championships team day – 27 August

Note: all of the above events would take place at Pure Dog events, Statfold Barn Railway, with the exception of the Agility World Championships team day which would be held at Dog Sports Derby.

 - The Junior Open Agility World Championships would take place in Finland from 14-17 July 2022.



- The European Open Championships were being held in Belgium from 28-31 July 2022.
- The Agility World Championships had not officially been announced, but the event was likely to take place from 21-25 September 2022 and would be held in Moscow, Russia. [Afternote: it was subsequently confirmed that the event would not now take place in Russia, but a revised date and venue would be announced by the FCI in due course.]
- Agility Team GB sponsorships were confirmed until end of 2022: Natural Instinct and Galican. Pure Agility would sponsor the team until 30 May 2022 after which Dog Sports Derby would become a sponsor.

116. Further information regarding Agility Team GB was available at:

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/agilityteamgb

ITEM 20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Competitors moving equipment

117. The Activities Committee had recently considered concerns regarding agility competitors moving equipment in rings during course walking or between classes without the permission of the relevant judges, following recent reports made to the office of such occurrences. In one case the obstacle numbers had been moved; in another, the equipment itself had been moved. The Committee considered that this was a serious matter, and that moving equipment may be considered as impugning the judge's decision. It wished to seek the views of the Council.
118. The Council was in full agreement with the concerns raised by the Activities Committee, noting 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. Council representatives were unanimous in supporting the Activities Committee's views on the matter, and in agreeing that any individual found to have moved equipment should be subject to strong sanctions.
119. The office undertook to issue relevant guidance as soon as possible. [Afternote: the following statement was issued via social media on 31 January 2022:

'As the agility season starts to heat up, The Kennel Club would like to issue a strong reminder to competitors about the correct procedure if they feel there is an error with the equipment in their ring.

At no point should anyone enter the ring and adjust the equipment themselves. If you feel there is any cause for concern you should approach the judge or show manager directly to discuss the issue, politely and calmly. It is then the judge's responsibility to examine the equipment and course design to ensure it is safe and appropriate.

Any tampering with the equipment is a serious incident and will be taken seriously if reported to The Kennel Club. It could also result in competitors being removed from competition for interfering with the safety or chance of winning of an opponent.'

ITEM 21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

120. The Council's next meeting would take place on 9 June 2022. Any items for the agenda must be submitted by 11 March 2022.

The meeting closed at 3.15 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'