

Agility Advisory Committee

AGILITY STEWARDS NOTES



INTRODUCTION

The Dog Sport of Agility involves four groups of people – Competitors, the Officials of the Club that is conducting the Trial including the Trial Manager and Trial Secretary, Judges and Stewards. Each plays an integral and essential part in the Trial. It would not be possible to conduct an Agility Trial without all of these roles being performed.

The Steward's job is very important. Stewards assist the Judge, help set up the course, change the heights of jumps, assemble the Competitors, escort them into the Ring and collect the dog's lead, time each dog's run accurately, record times and faults, replace knocked bars and equipment, and finally help pack up the equipment.

AGILITY TRIALS

Events: There are five different types of Trials – Agility and Jumping plus the Games Trials of Gamblers, Snooker and Strategic Pairs.

Classes: There are four different Classes – Master, Excellent, Novice and, for Agility and Jumping Trials, Open. There is no Open Class in Games Trials.

Heights: Each dog competes in its height Class with jump heights of either 200mm, 300mm, 400mm, 500mm or 600mm.

STEWARDS ROLES

There are usually three Stewards in each Ring, although sometimes there might be sufficient volunteers to have four or more, or there could be a shortage and the Club has to make do with only two. They perform the following roles:

Scribe: Records the time and faults incurred by each dog, or points in Games Trials, as indicated by the Judge. Most Trials use electronic timing that the Scribe can operate.

Timekeeper: If electronic timing is not being used there has to be a Timekeeper. Scribes and Timekeepers and are not to own or have an interest in any dog in a Class they are Stewarding.

Back-Up Timekeeper: There should also be a Back-Up Timekeeper. If electronic timing is being used the Ring Steward usually serves as the Back-Up Timekeeper.

Ring Steward: Takes care of the Ring and assists the Judge with equipment.

Assembly Steward: Assembles the Competitors so that the Ring is run as efficiently as possible. The Assembly Steward should have at least one Competitor ready to enter the Ring before the previous Competitor completes their run.

The specific duties of each of these Stewards are explained in more detail below.

SCRIBE

The Scribe records each dog's course time and the number of Faults, or Points in a Games Trial, or a Disqualification (DQ) as indicated by the Judge. So the Scribe needs to know the Catalogue Number of the dog in the Ring and should make sure that the Assembly Steward confirms this so there is no error or confusion.

If there is a failure of the electronic timing the Scribe should advise the Back-Up Timekeeper immediately. The Scribe should also signal that the dog's time is recorded correctly at the end of its run so the Back-Up Timekeeper does not clear their stopwatch prematurely.

At the end of each Class the Judge should check and sign the Score Sheet. Some Judges want to enter the placings themselves and others like the Scribe to do it for them to check so it's a good idea to ask the Judge which they prefer. When the Score Sheet is signed, it needs to be taken or sent to the Trial Secretary or the Scorer who will prepare the Qualification Cards for the Judge's signature.

Finally, it is important that a Scribe is able to concentrate on the Judge's signals when a dog is in the Ring, particularly in Games. So they should be positioned in the Ring so that they can see the Judge clearly at all times and are unlikely to be distracted. Scribes should not allow Competitors wanting to know their scores to interfere with their duties.

ASSEMBLY STEWARD

It is the Assembly Steward's job to keep the Ring moving. That involves calling for Competitors who are not present and, if necessary, taking a Competitor who is ready out of order. Remember that some Handlers are in other Classes at the Trial, or run more than one dog. If they have just been in another Ring they may need a few minutes to catch their breath. So the Assembly Steward has to be sure that the Scribe knows which dog is in the Ring.

As soon as a dog finishes its run the Assembly Steward should escort the next dog into the Ring and let the Handler set the dog in position. The Handler may remove the lead as soon as the previous dog is on its lead. The Steward should place the lead on a post or in a bucket at the exit gate to the Ring. At a change of height or Class the Assembly Steward should assist the Ring Steward and the Judge in re-setting the course.

RING STEWARD

The Ring Steward performs general maintenance duties in the Ring by helping the Judge to set the course, checking equipment between dogs, replacing dislodged bars, etc.

They usually have a stopwatch and serve as Back-Up Timekeeper. In that case it is important that the Ring Steward is positioned so they can see the start and finish clearly, and times each dog from the same position. The Scribe should advise when that time will be needed but, if the finish is not recorded correctly, that may be after dog has completed its run. The Ring Steward should not clear the stopwatch until the Scribe signals that the electronic timing has operated correctly. Back-Up Timekeepers should make sure they are familiar with the operation of the stopwatch before the Trial starts.

In Gamblers and Snooker the Ring Steward might have to manually operate the electronic timing because it may not be possible to have start and/or finish timing "gates".

SCORING

Agility & Jumping: To qualify with a Clear Round a dog must complete the Course within the Standard Course Time (SCT) and not incur any Course Faults. A Qualifying Certificate is issued to all dogs with a Clear Round. The winner of the Class is the dog that completes the course in the fastest time with the least number of faults.

Time Faults: The time taken to complete the course is recorded to the 1/100th of a second. Any time taken over the SCT is applied as Time Faults.

Course Faults: Five Faults are incurred for each mistake made by the dog and Handler – e.g. dislodging a bar or the Hoop; not clearing the Broad Jump or going between the uprights on the Board Jump; missing a gap in the Weavers; a “refusal” at an obstacle; not touching the “colour” on a contact obstacle (Scramble, Dog Walk or Seesaw); leaving the Table before 5-seconds has elapsed; etc.

Disqualification: A dog can DQ for more serious errors – e.g. accumulating three refusals; missing an obstacle; attempting obstacles in the wrong order; not re-attempting a “refused” obstacle; repeating a gap or going back to a missed gap in the Weavers; the Handler touches an obstacle or the dog in a way that assists the dog; the Handler goes under or over an obstacle; the Handler crosses the “distance handling line” in Open or Gamblers; the Handler brings food or a training aid into the Ring; the Handler goes back over the Start Line, except when there has been a refusal; the Handler does not obey an order by the Judge; the dog fouls the Ring; the dog completes an obstacle in a dangerous manner; the dog is out-of-control; etc.

Games Trials: There are no refusals in Games. The obstacle either does not get scored or, in Strategic Pairs, has to be completed by the other dog in the pair.

Strategic Pairs: A Strategic Pairs course is not laid out consecutively but as a series of sequences. At least one dog in the pair has to complete each obstacle correctly. Each dog must attempt at least one sequence of obstacles and there must be at least two changes of the dog attempting the obstacles. If a dog faults an obstacle the other dog has to complete that obstacle correctly. This can be repeated as often as necessary until one or other dog successfully completes the obstacle. The winner is the pair that completes the entire course correctly in the fastest time.

Snooker: This is based on the table-game of Snooker. Dogs score points for each obstacle in the Ring. There are either three or four Single Hurdles worth 1 point each. These are the *red* obstacles and should have red uprights. The other obstacles are identified by a coloured flag which represents their points value as determined by the Judge – 2 for *yellow*, 3 for *green*, 4 for *brown*, 5 for *blue*, 6 for *pink* and 7 for *black* (the same as for the balls on a Snooker table).

In the Opening Sequence, after a dog successfully completes a *red* it can attempt one of the other colours. Each *red* can only be attempted once. After three *reds* have been attempted the dog must then complete all the other colours in their correct numerical order. To qualify in the Opening Sequence a Novice dog has to score at least 10 points from the three *reds*, Excellent must score at least 15 and Masters have to score a minimum of 20.

They then have to complete all the colours in the Closing Sequence correctly. Any Course Fault in the Closing Sequence will cause a non-qualification (NQ). The winner is the dog that successfully completes the course with the highest number of points. If two or more dogs have the same score then the dog with the faster time is awarded the higher place.

Gamblers: A Gamblers course is in two parts – the 45-seconds Points Accumulation Period and a distance challenge known as the Gamble. In the Points Accumulation Period each obstacle has a points value – 1 for a Single Hurdle; 2 for a Broad Jump, Hoop, Spread Hurdle, Tunnel or set of 4 weavers; 3 for a contact obstacle (Scramble, Dog Walk or Seesaw) or 8 Weavers; and 4 points for 12 Weavers. The Table is not used.

Each dog has 45-seconds to score as many points as they can by successfully completing any of the obstacles in the Ring. They can attempt the obstacles in the Gamble but not attempt two consecutively. There are 4 obstacles in the Gamble for the Novice Class, 4 or 5 for Excellent and at least 5 but no more than 7 for Masters. Each obstacle can be attempted twice, so a dog can only attempt an obstacle in the Gamble once in the Points Accumulation Period.

After 45 seconds a hooter or whistle will sound and the dog must then successfully complete all the obstacles in the Gamble in their correct sequence. The first obstacle in the Gamble is worth 2 points, the second 4 points, the third 6 points, the fourth 8 points, etc.

To qualify in the Points Accumulation Period a Novice dog must score at least 20 points, Excellent at least 25 and a minimum of 30 for Masters. The dog must then complete the Gamble correctly within the time allocated by the Judge. Any fault in the Gamble will result in non-qualification (NQ). The winner is the dog with the highest number of points. If two or more dogs have the same score then the dog with the faster time is awarded the higher place.

Tied Scores: In the event of a tie – identical Time and Course Faults or Points in Games – the result will be determined by the dogs concerned running-off over the same course. This will happen before the course is changed for the next Class.

OTHER INFORMATION

Contracts: Stewards should sign a Stewards Contract, either when they agree to Steward or on the day of the Trial. This records the Stewards for insurance purposes and, when issued in advance, serves as a reminder of the Trial and its details.

Times: Most daytime Trials are doubles meaning that Stewards can serve in the morning, in the afternoon or both. The Trial Manager should advise the time a Steward should arrive. Please inform the Trial Manager if you are going to be late or have to withdraw as a Steward.

Weather: Agility Trials will proceed in all but the most extreme weather. So Stewards should be prepared with appropriate clothing and footwear, a hat, sunscreen and waterproofs.

Safety: Safety is an important part of a Steward's job. Make sure that Competitors enter and exit through the correct gate so dogs do not come into close contact with one another. If a dog is out-of-control, or the Judge directs, Stewards may have to get the lead or restrain a dog.

Breaks: There are opportunities for Stewards to have breaks during a Trial while the Competitors walk the Course after it has been set-up and measured by the Judge.

Food & Drink: You will be supplied with lunch in a day Trial or dinner at a twilight Trial. Clubs should also supply drinks, but it doesn't hurt to bring some, just in case.

Rewards: The work that Stewards do is highly valued. Most Clubs make a nominal contribution toward the Stewards' travel costs or offer some other token of their appreciation.

We hope that you enjoy your time as a Steward at Dog Agility Trials.