

FAQ's for those new to Agility

Our training is going well so far, is there anything else I should be doing to get us ready for competitions?

The competition environment can be a little overwhelming for both us and our dogs, spending time simply 'hanging out' at local events can be hugely beneficial in many ways and help to prepare you to enter the ring when the time comes. Check out <http://www.dogagility.org.nz/eventinfo.html> for a calendar of events. Talk to club members and see who's going to which events, there is always someone to walk a course or discuss techniques & strategies with.

What is the difference between a Ribbon Trial & Champ show?

Ribbon Trials are often entered on the day and a good way to start competing. You don't need to be registered with the NZ Kennel Club but your dog does need to have been measured to ensure they are jumping the right sized obstacles. Clear round certificates are given to all those that get a clear round (no faults) with ribbons for place getters, generally 10% of entries.

Champ Shows are a bit more formal with entries closing at least 2 weeks prior to the competition and the courses are a little harder than ribbon trials. You must be registered with the NZKC & your dog must be measured and have a permanent agility number before you can complete your entry form. Champ shows also often have prize money and sponsored prizes for 1st-3rd as well as clear round certificates and ribbons.

How do I get my dog measured?

We try to schedule measuring at various times throughout the year at club as the need arises, there is also often measuring available on show days. The process can be stressful for some dogs (and handlers) so having your dog comfortable with the process in advance will help. Check out <http://www.dogagility.org.nz/information/2011%20getting%20dog%20ready%20to%20be%20measured%20for%20agility.pdf> for tips on preparing your dog. The current show schedule <https://www.showsec.co.nz/showspage.php> will show if measurers will be available for upcoming events, always allow plenty of time if getting measured on a show day.

I think we're ready to try a ribbon trial or champ show, what do I need to do?

All dogs need to be registered with NZKC and allocated an Agility number before they can enter a champ show but you can enter a ribbon trial with a temporary number. It is a bit of a process to go through but there's a brilliant flow chart to guide you through it on <http://www.dogagility.org.nz/information/Guide%20to%20entering%20a%20Championship%20Competition.pdf>

What events can I enter?

Jumpers C – these can be either ribbon trials or champ shows and have just jumps and tunnels so are a good place to start. The development progression is C to B to A.

Elementary – specific to ribbon trials, this event is specifically for dogs new to competition (never won an event). Elementary B is for new handlers (no wins) and has no weave poles whereas Elementary A is for experienced handlers (previous wins with another dog) and has one set of six poles.

Starters – can be either ribbon trials or champ shows and is more complex than Elementary with the addition of weaves. All dogs are starters' dogs until they have 2 wins, ribbon trial wins put you up at ribbon trials, champ show wins put you up at both ribbon and champ shows. You can enter both starters and elementary in the same show.

Novice - can be either ribbon trials or champ shows and is more complex than Starters with the addition of contacts (A-frame & dog walk). This is considered a level above starters; a starters' dog can be entered in both novice and starters but not novice and elementary.

I'm heading to my first competition! What do I need to know?

Consider how your dog will spend the day. No dogs are allowed to be left tied up on their own at events so a crate is always a good option, they will also need shelter from the weather, consider the sun, heat, rain, other dogs etc.

Bring heaps of treats with you! Food reward must be kept in a hard container. No food or toys are allowed in the ring (remember to check your pockets), but these can be left at the entrance with your lead (there will be someone taking these to the end for you).

It can be a good idea to bring a change of footwear, and even a change of clothes. It can be a long day with changeable weather and competitions rarely get cancelled for rain, so you can get pretty wet!

If it's a ribbon trial, you will need to enter in the club house. Bring cash! It is usually \$3 - \$5 per run. If your dog doesn't have a permanent number, they will give you a temporary number.

You will be told when you are allowed to walk the course; you must do this without your dog. If you are new to walking courses join up with others and walk it together, watch how others walk it, talk about the different options to figure out what's best for you.

Make sure you 'toilet' your dog before entering the ring, it can be handy to have them pee on command but allowing time for them to have a good run to sniff, mark & toilet naturally is beneficial.

Dogs are to either do their run "naked" (with no collar) or have a flat collar that may have a D ring, but no other attachments. Many handlers use martingale collars for competition as they are easy to slip on and off.

When you enter the ring for your run, call out your dog's number to the scribe (they will be sitting in the tent), make eye contact with the judge (a lot will give you a nod or a thumbs up), then you are free to start.

More detailed information on competition day can be found at <http://www.dogsnz.org.nz/showinfo3.html>

Most importantly, Have Fun!

As with training nights, competitions are still about doing something fun with your dog. Remember this is a fun, supportive and collaborative sport; there is always someone close at hand to answer questions, offer advice or generally have a chat about things.