

# Agility



## A Spectator's Guide for Dog Agility

Many of you may have never been to an agility competition. If you would like to go and see what the sport is all about the best place to go for calendar information would be the Agility committee website which is found at [www.dogagility.org.nz](http://www.dogagility.org.nz) This website has a calendar section for the North and South Island as well as a Club section, so that you can contact the Clubs and find out where the event is.

### What Is Dog Agility?

In brief, it's a fast-paced sport in which a dog runs through a timed obstacle course as directed by the handler. Agility training strengthens the bond between dog and handler, and provides fun and exercise for both.

Events are held most weekends around the country. The Clubs all have two or more weekends when they put on an event. Some Clubs hold these events at their usual Club grounds, others use Council grounds and A&P showground facilities. Depending on the size of the event and the number of entries there may be one, two or more rings set up. The rings are 30m x 40m and usually demarcated by ropes and electric fence standards. The ring will also have a smaller ring attached called the Assembly area where the next dog will wait to have its turn. In addition there will be a tent, or a table at which the scrimer sits. The Scrimer watches the Judge and writes down the penalties signaled by the judge, as well as the time the dog takes to run the course.

On the agility course, you will see a variety of obstacles:

- Jumps – Most of the jumps are metal construction with PVC bars. Some will also have colorful and decorative wings to the side. There may also be spread hurdles, a long jump and the hoop jump, which is a round ring held up by a frame. Each type of jump is set at the proper height for each class, determined by the height of the dog at the shoulders. Dogs must clear the full height of the jump without knocking a bar off.
- Tunnels – There are two types of tunnels, open tunnels which are flexible and can be arranged in curves; and chutes, which are open at one end and have a collapsed fabric tube at the other.
- Contact Obstacles – The contact obstacles, so called because of the different coloured contact zones at each end, consist of the A-frame, the dogwalk, the crossover and the see-saw. To perform these obstacles correctly, the dog must get at least one paw in each contact zone when they ascend and descend the obstacle. The contact zone rule is for safety considerations. The Aframe is the tallest of the contact obstacles, the dogwalk is long and narrow, and the crossover has four planks coming out at right angles from a central platform. At the top of the crossover the dog has to turn left or right and may not go straight ahead.
- Weave Poles – The dog must enter to the right of the first pole and zig-zag through to the end. They must not miss a pole.





- **Electronic Timers** – These are situated at the first and last obstacles and will record the length of time the dog takes to run the course. They are connected wirelessly to the control box on the scrimer's table.

### The Judge

The judge will be in the middle of the course. Not only does the judge design the pattern and supervise the set-up of the courses, but also must watch the dog's and handler's performance and indicate faults or mistakes. Watch for his or her hand signals to indicate mistakes.

### Faults

Faults occur if the handler touches the dog or an obstacle while on course; the dog runs the wrong course, misses a contact zone; misses a weave pole; displaces a jump bar; or exceeds the amount of time set by the judge for running the course.

### What happens at an Event?

**Courses are set up:** The club members will have a course plan from the judge, which is to scale and they will place the obstacles on the ground as per the plan. The Judge will then check the course is correct and any obstacles which might move when the dog negotiated them will be pegged down.

**Walking the course:** When the course is ready the handlers will 'walk the course'. They do this as a group, without their dogs, following the numbers to become familiar with how the course goes. Most handlers try to walk the course as many times as they can in the time allotted, to plan their strategy. You may see handlers during a course walk actually running the course with an imaginary dog, giving the commands as they would during their competing round. Or other handlers gather in little groups and discuss potential problem spots and how they are going to handle them. Competitors are usually given about 10 minutes to walk the course.

**The Competition Runs:** The dogs run the course individually, off leash, with or without collars. The handler will check with the judge and give the Scrimer their number and then they can go. As each dog runs, the judge indicates the faults, which are noted on a sheet of paper by the Scrimer. At the completion of the round, the Scrimer will write down the time on the sheet. This will then be picked up by another person who will write it on a whiteboard and then give it to the Scorer who inputs it into a computer. The Computer calculates the results and also prints off clear round certificates for those who collected no faults or refusals.

### Class Levels of Agility

There are three types of competition: Agility, Jumpers and Games.

**Agility** has five levels – Elementary, Starters, (for beginners, no contact obstacles), Novice, Intermediate, and Senior.

**Jumpers** has 3 levels – C grade, B grade and A grade.

**Games** has 3 levels – games that can be played are Gamblers Blackjack, Snooker and jumpers pairs.

As you would expect, the courses and the rules get harder as you move up the grades.

### Height Levels

There are four different height levels – micro, mini, medium and maxi. The jumping obstacles are all altered for the different height of the dog. Where the numbers of each height is more than 15, the class will be split and the dogs will compete solely against their height range. Where numbers are low all dogs compete together.

### Prize-Giving

This will usually be held at the end of the day. Successful teams will receive a clear round certificate, a ribbon and cash prize as well as sponsors product. Some clubs also offer trophies for excellent runs.

### What about Spectators?

- Spectators are always welcome at Agility events, however, you do need to be mindful it is a competition and that there will be many dogs around.
- There are a number of different types of dogs at these events. Many of them will be very excited. Before you reach out to pet a dog, always ask the owner/handler FIRST. Please especially be sure your children observe this rule.
- Please supervise your children at all times. At no time should you go up to a dog that is by itself, whether tied up or in a crate in the car.
- Feel free to sit or stand ringside and watch, but please remember to stay back a reasonable distance from the ring itself and away from ring entrances and exits. Avoid eating too close to the ring as a dog might like to share!
- It is against the rules for spectators to assist or coach the handler/dog team by, for example, yelling out the correct obstacle order from the sidelines. It is also not appropriate to shout the dog's name, since this would distract the dog from the handler's commands.
- Feel free to applaud and cheer the dogs on, and show your appreciation at the end of a particularly good or entertaining run.

