



Kiwi Dog Agility

Sharky's Diary - Chapter Eleven

This month has been a bit of a fact finding mission for me to work out Sharky's weak points and to work on them. There is just over 2 months before I intend to enter him at his first show, so I need to know what to work on.

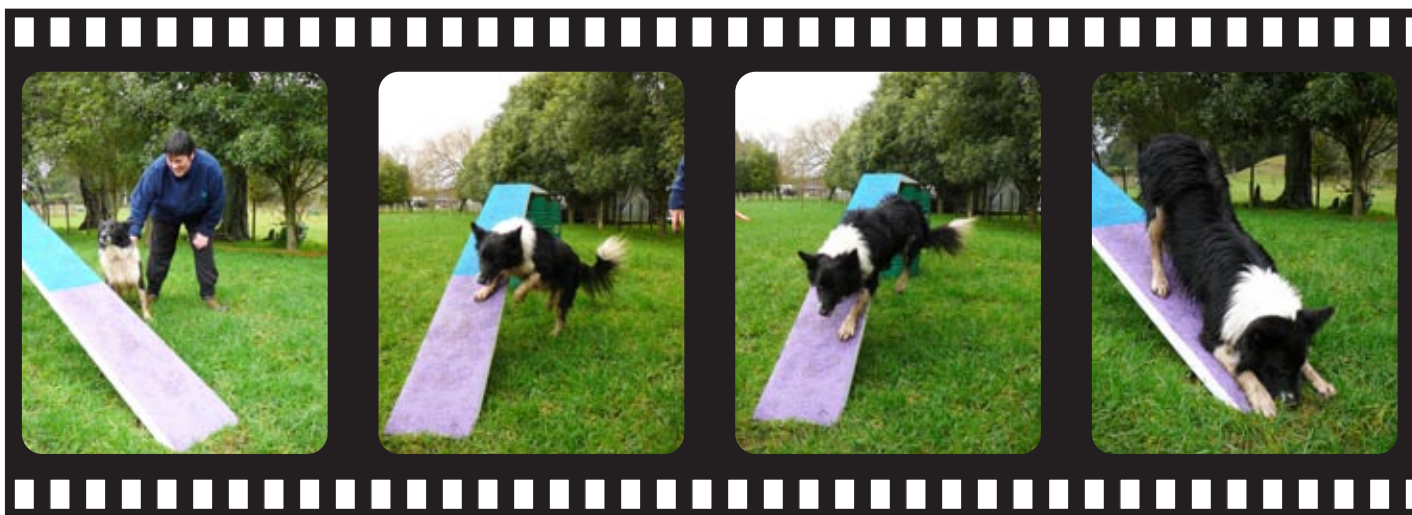
Recently I rubber chipped my dog walk and cross-over. When the cross-over was in the garage, I thought I would try Sharky on the new chipped surface, so asked him to jump on from the side (this is how I originally trained it using the travel plank, and also how I have introduced any new height on the A-frame). Even though he had done his travel plank in the garage a few months ago, he obviously did not realise that the two on two off (2o2o) position that he normally does on the grass should be the same on concrete. So he stopped just short of the 2o2o, and adopted his nose position. I just waited, and he knew there was something wrong so he reversed a bit further up the plank and did another nose touch. I waited again, so he reversed further up with another nose touch. By this time I was nearly wetting myself because the expression on his face was so funny, and I just couldn't understand how we could have got things so wrong. I concluded that in this different environment, it was like a new exercise, so it was a reminder that I still needed to be training my travel plank in various locations and on various surfaces. I have also reverted at times to clicking and treating for good 2o2o position with nose touches, just to continue reinforcing that good behaviour.

Below I have included pictures of what position I am in when I get Sharky to jump on the contact from the side and also his end position. It is a very good way to encourage speed and proof contacts without him having to do the whole obstacle every time.

I have continued my jump training, and have a combination of grids in my back yard and do various grids as I feel like it. I have a double box set up sometimes with rails, and sometimes with jump bumps depending on how tricky the sequence is that I want to work on. I have my 5 mini jump grid set up for bounce jumping. I also have a grid of 6 jumps at 5 metres apart with jump heights set at midi, mini, or poles slanted from mini to midi. When I first started this grid, Sharky would put in some single bounce strides which I didn't want, so I put jump bumps in between the actual jumps to encourage him to put in the extra stride. Sharky has got quite a long stride, and does not have trouble extending over jumps, so I want to teach him how to collect his stride as well.

I have done quite a lot of work on rear crosses independent of agility obstacles. Because Sharky was so good at this, I just assumed that he would be fine when I crossed behind him over a jump – not quite the case! So I have gone back to using just 1 jump and sending him over it on such a sharp angle that it would be hard for him not to turn away from me, hence reacting to my cross behind his body line. I have had several sessions doing this, and he is getting a lot better, but this is a weakness that I need to keep assessing and training until I am happy with his awareness of what I am doing if I am behind him. He is very good at turns when I do crosses in front of him, but as a handler who is not always convinced of my own speed I often end up doing rear crosses so it is a good idea for me to check that Sharky is comfortable with this at an early stage.

As I have used a one jump technique to train jumping, using the same method for the tyre made sense. In a very quick session Sharky was comfortable jumping the tyre at maxi with good understanding of what was required. In this session I started with a maxi jump, knelt



Sharky's weaves have continued progress well. I have been adding distractions such as a tunnel close to the end of the poles and then I alternate between asking him to take the tunnel or getting him to turn straight back to me after completing the weaves. By doing this I am proofing his understanding of completing all of the poles and not popping out due to anticipating the next obstacle. I have also discovered that we had a pole skipping issue when I lead out past the line of weaves. He was running so fast to get to me that he would often skip a weave. So I put up my 4 poles again with a slightly open channel to make it easier for him and worked on getting him to sprint through the weaves while I was ahead of him. That seems to have solved the problem, and now I practise doing a lead-out to jump bumps and weaves with me standing at the end of the weaves.

beside it and clicked and treated when he offered the behaviour of jumping through the tyre. Because he has been used to doing this with a normal jump, he offered this behaviour quickly, and because he got an instant reward was then happy to repeat the behaviour. I must reiterate that if you have done good foundation training for focus and your dog understands how to jump, then training them to jump different obstacles should not be difficult. I have done similar training with the long jump, and though I have not done it at the full 1.8m length, I do not anticipate an issue in the future.

So having done all this training, and not having gone to a dog show for a while, I just couldn't resist the flygility tournament at Tauranga at the end of July. I had spent about 5 minutes teaching Sharky how to use the box when it was there at a show in January. He loves to run

around with toys in his mouth, so I didn't think that would be an issue. So the weekend before the tournament I had about 4 sessions teaching him the box, and specifically training him so that he should look for the small flygility jump after he had retrieved the ball from the box. After that, it was a small matter of sending him down a line of jumps very similar to the jump grids that he had been doing to fetch the ball and come back again. He loved the new game he was allowed to play, and was only a bit confused if I put the tunnel in the middle of the course as he hasn't done that for a while. The next Saturday I put a trickier course up with a bend in it, and he ran it like a pro. I thought Cannon should have a practise also as he hadn't done fly for nearly 2 years, and he couldn't cope with the tricky course at all!

Anyway, after ignoring all the weather bomb signs, and deciding that it was fine enough for us to go in the morning, Sharky had a very successful day. He won Elementary, and got through to the semi-finals of Beginners. Entries weren't that high due to the weather forecast, but he still had a large number of runs and kept learning during the day. I was very impressed by his focus, and I don't think he even noticed the dog in the next lane because he had worked out what his job was, and he just wanted to get on and do it. I was not intending to do flygility

with him, and possibly will not do much of it in the future, but it was an opportunity to test out his focus in a competitive environment and see what happened.

So my training intention for the next month is to:

- Continue jump training, specifically with different types of crosses, serpentine etc
- Graduate to having my contact equipment near full height
- Continue to find opportunities to practise at different venues (I have been travelling with travel plank, stick in ground weave poles, and jump bumps)
- Keep testing my lead-outs in a variety of situations
- Change the look of the jumps I am doing – putting jackets over them, barrels etc on the sides for wing jumps

Also, Sharky and Rain are having their Paws N Music pairs routine debut at the NDTA. We have now worked out what is to be included in the routine, but there is a bit of training required for me and Sharky to be able to keep up with his Mum!

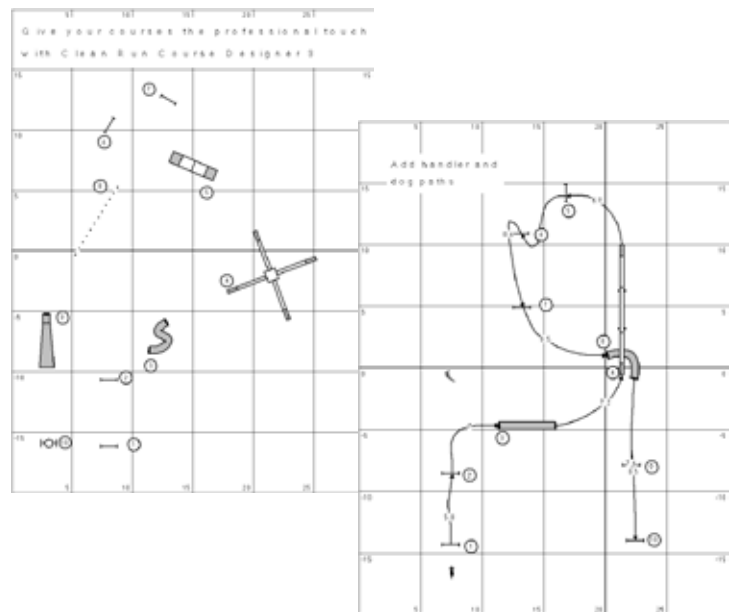
Fiona Ferrar

Clean Run Course Designer

Clean Run Course Designer is a computer program that allows users to electronically create agility courses, all through the click of a few buttons. This has traditionally been used mainly by Judges, and is a very useful tool for designing the innovative and interesting courses that agility competitors encounter most weekends! Clean Run allows users to place agility equipment on a measured grid representing an agility arena, and organise these into (hopefully) a flowing course. Judges can also calculate course times, and trace the dog or handler lines they desire. Judges can easily email courses to each other for critique or comment.

Clean Run also offers agility competitors the chance to create their own training modules. This can be incredibly useful for club instructors for club training nights, or the more serious agility competitor!

The NZKC Agility committee recently offered Clean Run Course Designer 3 to Judges and Competitors at a discounted rate. Due to a high demand, the Agility Committee has purchased further units and these can be sold onto any interested parties at a very reasonable price.



For further information, please contact Nick Chester at npw_chester@hotmail.com



Wal's not coming to NDTA this year...

But his trusty friend the "Dog" will make an appearance in print on the spiral cube notepad that will be in the registration bags. When I was hunting for a cartoonist that will be in the registration bags. When I was hunting for a cartoonist to supply an image to adorn the notepads I decided to use the assistance of "Google" and the first entry to come up was Murray Ball. And if you don't ask the question there is not much likelihood of getting an answer let alone the one you might like.

After a brief e-mail exchange with the dog's mum Pam Ball a personalized image arrived in the post courtesy of Murray along with a very nice message wishing us all the very best for this year's event.

So although we won't be seeing Wal doing Test C or running in Senior this year there is always the hope that when NDTA is held a little nearer to Gisborne he just might make an appearance.

Lyn Sayers