

Notes from Judge's meeting

8 March 2014 at Tauranga

Attendees: Janette Davis, John Muir, Alan McClumpha, Dyson Beasley, Ron Frater, Amanda Benson, Fiona Ferrar, Keri Neilson, Justine Dale, Steve Chester, Abi Lister, Robyn Fargher, Nick Chester.

Issues Discussed

Weaves

The issue of when a fault and refusal is given was discussed. There was some disparity of views on if a refusal could be given in the case of a dog popping weaves halfway through and then being re-presented. Some said that refusals couldn't be given as the regs say a refusal can only be given in situations where "no prior attempt" to weave had been made. RF said that he was on the AC at the time that this reg was changed, and the intent of the reg is to allow multiple refusals, the same as any other obstacles, and that each new presentation was considered on its own, therefore allowing refusals to be given after a course fault had been given in the weaves. It was discussed about if this was a good idea – do the regs penalise somebody for taking their dog back to the start of the weaves, rather than just trying to put them back in at the point where they popped. Do we need a reg that says a dog needs to be taken back to the start if it pops?

NC asked what the rationale was for the current regs around backweaving (dog has to take the very last weave pole from the wrong direction in order to be D'd). RF said that no other obstacle can be taken from the middle, so it was an attempt to make the weaves consistent. Discussion around if this needs to be looked at – perhaps one gate backwards was enough to be D'd, but perhaps current regs make for easier judging.

It was pointed out that the regs seems to be missing a minimum/maximum number of pole – NC and SC will take this to the AC.

Rule changes/gear

Are judges given a chance to look at regs before they changed to highlight any errors (like min/max of weave poles as above)? Would they utilise such an opportunity? Something for the AC to consider. KN said WAG want to build a new wishing well, but the regs actually don't work – it is impossible to build one with the dimensions given in the regs.

WOF of gear – has this fallen between the cracks? Gear should all be warranted, but some new clubs or new gear hasn't been checked by anyone.

Justine asked what a judge can do if they find a piece of gear they are using doesn't meet the regs. In situations where it is easy to change (i.e. a tunnel) this should be done immediately. Otherwise this should be noted and reported to the AC and the club at the end of the event. It was suggested that judges are issued with a form after each show to fill out regarding gear and any issues they come up against as a way of ensuring gear is up to scratch.

Dealing with complaints

How do judge's deal with course complaints? Important to differentiate between "I don't like that" and "this is unsafe". Judges need to take time and confer with other judges when they receive criticism of courses or calls. Generally course design has improved and dangerous setups have decreased, but some judges are still not good at taking criticisms. Also important as judges to be careful of how and when we criticise each other's course and calls – we need to do this constrictively, and tell the judge directly. Unfortunately this hasn't always been the case. Some issues are just hard to judge, and we will get it wrong. This is just part of judging and we and competitors need to accept we won't always get it 100% right. KN suggested that we could provide video snippets of unusual incidents and put them on the website – with possibilities on how this would be judged. One example was when has a dog officially left the contact? Many dogs that do a 2 on 2 off contact may have unusual positioning, and how do we judge this? Probably needs an official clarification of when a dog has deemed to have left the contact.

Addressing unsafe gear – some collapsible tunnels have very slippery entrances. During the WOF checks the AC can look at this, although it may require a reg change to actually address it. Nothing to stop judges from refusing to sue the obstacle though.

Training in the ring.

AM raised the issue of an increasing number of people training in the ring, bringing toys in with them and deliberately D'ing themselves. Many people will also blow a clear round if they don't get the contact behaviour they want from their dogs, even if they are clear to this point. AM feels this violates the reg which requires competitors to be "competing seriously". It was clarified that the regs require a dog to be D'd for bringing a training aid into the ring. A judge can also refuse to allow people to run with a toy, or ask a competitor to leave the ring for not competing seriously. But this is optional and a judge can also let a person run with a training aid, with the maximum penalty being a D. A judge can also ask competitors to leave the ring if they feel they aren't competing seriously, and cases of people re-doing contacts would certainly be covered under the regs. AM feels that people doing this are not competing within the spirit of the regs, but most judges present felt comfortable with competitors doing this, as long as they didn't use a lot of time in doing it. It was felt that people running with toys should ask the judge prior to judging and not simply assume that this would be OK. The AC could possibly put out a notice around this situation.