

# HANDS UP

## The info letter for NZ Agility JUDGES

Issue 3

**This issue:**

- Checking your course
- Jumpers guidelines
- Ring layout
- Quiz

Hi there,  
This is an information letters for Agility judges. The aim is to provide some information and stimulate some discussion, and any/all response will be welcomed!!

Regards,

Karen de Wit  
NZ Agility Committee (Judges)



# Checking your course

A couple of incidents recently reminded me of the value of checking your course before the competitors walk it, and the importance of communication between Judges and competitors.

In one instance the course was being walked and had been walked for some time, with some competitors leaving the course to go and get their dogs. The Judge noticed that a number was in the wrong place and moved it, resulting in a major change to the course layout. The competitors still walking the course were told and walked it again correctly, but unfortunately there were a few people who were not there when that occurred and they subsequently ran the course as they had walked it, and consequently got disqualified.

A second instance involved a Judge who had not finished checking the course, went way to do something else and when they came back the course was being walked. There was a layout issue that they would have liked to change but they decided that since people had already walked the course, they left it alone.

A third instance involved a number in the wrong place as well, some competitors running the course as if the number was one side of the obstacle and others running it the opposite way. (In this case because the numbers were printed on both sides this caused the problem to be much worse than if the number had been on one side only.)

In another example pegs were left in a tunnel and only noticed after a few dogs had run and people wondered what the tinkling noise was!!

These examples highlight a few things

1. Check plans regarding obstacle numbers.
2. Check your course thoroughly (including number placement) before allowing anyone to walk it.
3. Liaise well with ring staff so that they know if the course is ready to be walked or not
4. Check all equipment is adequately pegged/tied down.
5. Once course walking has begun, only make safety changes.
6. If something needs to be changed make sure EVERYONE knows it has been changed.

Whilst checking your course be attentive to other things that should occur:-

- Obstacles should all be pegged down and set up correctly.
- Timers should be at correct height, turned on and checked before the first person runs.
- Equipment not required should be moved away from the ringside especially if in the dog's line of sight.
- Pegs not required should be removed.
- Seesaw should be pegged/or marked if pegging isn't an option.
- Ring ropes should be pegged down and standards moved out of the way of people starting/finishing their run.
- Scrimer desk should be placed close to the start to allow best communication with competitors.
- Course should be measured and timers should be checked and turned on.

# JUMPERS Guidelines



The Jumpers guidelines were formulated to guide Judges in the types of course design for jumpers courses. Whilst some options were regulated it was decided that other things would be added to a guidelines publication. All Judges should be familiar with the guidelines and follow them, and any deviation from the guidelines should only be made under extreme situations.

Rate of travel is set by the regulations, and judges must set a SCT based on these. There is a range that Judges can select from.

The Guidelines include description of the different types of challenges and arranges them in number and type for each level of Jumpers.

Challenge Type	Grade Cs	Grade B	Grade A
Obstacle Discrimination	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Wrong Course Potential	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Change of Sides	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Wrap	Yes	Yes	Yes
Closed Approach		Yes*	Yes
Spacing Variations		Yes*	Yes
Pull/Push Through		Yes	Yes
Serpentine		Yes	Yes
Handler Constraint		Yes*	Yes
Layering		Yes	Yes
Managed Approach			Yes
Refusal Potential			Yes
Timing Sequences			Yes

*\*Further criteria for these challenge types are discussed in the relevant sections for each Grade.*

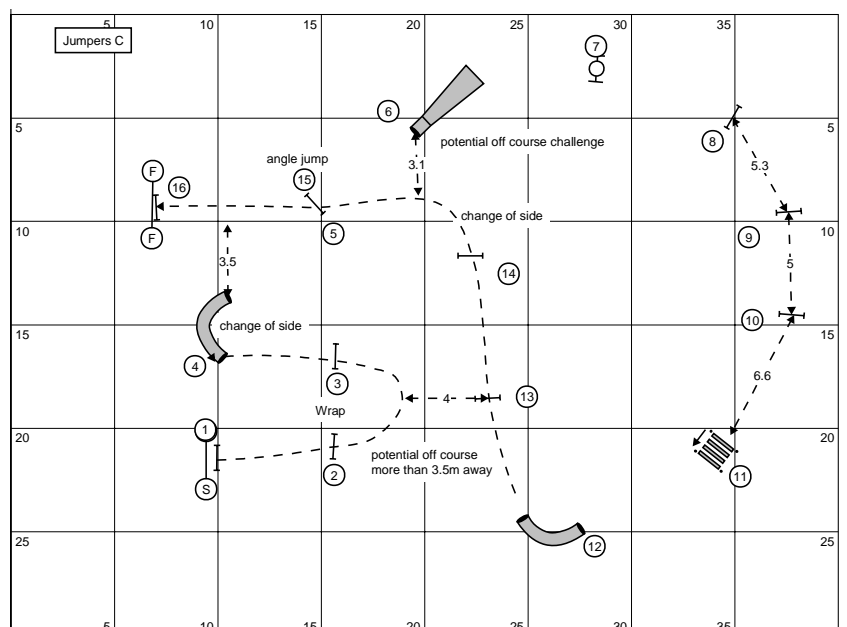
What follows are some excerpts from the guidelines of important things that should be considered whenever designing a Jumpers course.

## Grade C.

2-3 challenges.

Courses should be flowing and invite the dogs to move at speed with good distances between obstacles. The space between obstacles throughout the majority of the course should be in the range of 5m to 7m

There should be no attempt at **trick distances** between jumps. (What is a trick distance? An example would be a straight line where distance between hurdles is 5m, 5m, 4m, 5m)



The Grade C handlers should be given plenty of manoeuvring room around and between the obstacles.

Grade C challenges may include **leading out at the start, switching sides of the dog while moving or sending the dog ahead.**

Other challenges are:-

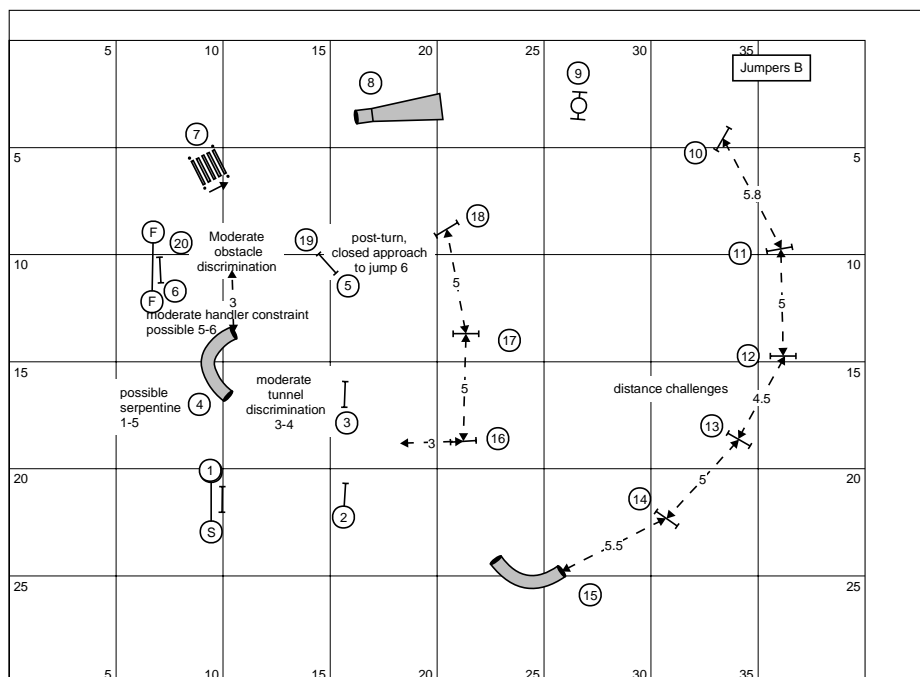
- **Obstacle Discrimination** – the distance between edges of the obstacles must be a **minimum of 2m.**
- **Wrong Course Potential** – (Crossing Patterns), – dogs should have to deviate 3m or more off the flow of the course path to get disqualified. *The correct obstacle should be the one most obvious to the dog from the previous one.* The orientation of the obstacles should be such that the flow of the course shall present the dog with open approaches to the entry plane of the obstacles.
- **Changes of Sides are permitted and encouraged,** These challenges are especially useful in demonstrating that obstacles can be successfully performed regardless of which side the handler is handling from. Changes of Side should not generally be combined with other challenge types such that a Timing Sequence challenge is inadvertently created.
- **Wraps** – the positioning of a single obstacle such that a dog must be directed around the exit plane of the obstacle immediately after performing it. The obstacle to be wrapped should not be so close to another obstacle that a pull through type challenge is inadvertently created.

All other challenges are NOT encouraged.

## Grade B.

### 3-4 challenges.

Course design at this level shall begin to shift emphasis toward **directional control** through utilisation of fundamental handling skills to progress fluidly through the course while working with greater speed than at the previous level. Better response control is more apparent, but still not necessarily strong. Dogs should be able to demonstrate increased confidence and speed on the obstacles without incurring a fault while moving within the natural flow of a course which utilises moderate-length flowing lines between challenges.



Challenges.

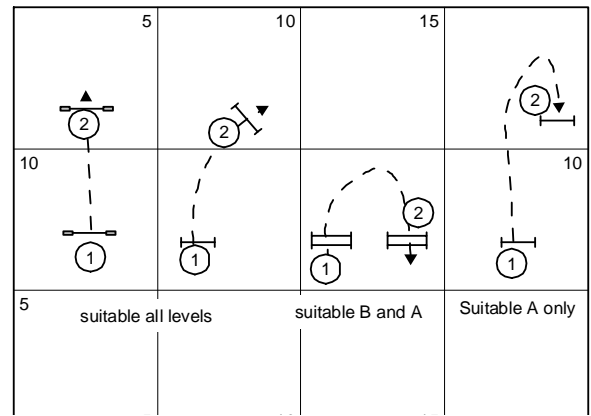
- **Obstacle Discrimination** is permitted but should be set no closer than **1.5m from closest edge** of one obstacle to the closest edge of the other
- **Wrong Course Potential is permitted and encouraged** - wrong course obstacles should generally require that the dog deviate more than **3m** off the course flow.
- **Changes of Side are encouraged** - the course design should include multiple changes of side while moving, including some changes of direction within Crossing Patterns. *Changes of side per se may not be included in the challenge list unless accompanied by another challenge.*
- **Spacing Variations are permitted** - the space between obstacles throughout the majority of the course should be in the range of 5m to 7m. Unusually short or long approach distances outside of this range should be used only once at this level primarily to test single obstacle performance.
- **Serpentines are permitted** - Obstacles used in a serpentine at this level should have no more than moderately-closed approaches.

- **Pull Throughs** - this challenge is a type of wrap where an adjacent obstacle is in close proximity. The dog must then be directed around or between these obstacles in order to perform the next obstacle in sequence. Pull Throughs with a moderate gap between the obstacles are permitted.
- **Layering** – the placement of an obstacle such that the handler path is separated from the dog’s path, is permitted.
- **Moderate Handler Constraint** - the blockage of the direct handler path either through alignment of the obstacles. Moderate handler constraints are permitted. Obstacles placed in a manner that present a handler constraint shall be carefully considered. Handler paths through a sequence should not be constricted in such a manner to generally require an unnatural handling position.
- **Closed Approach** - Closed Approach positions that deliberately encourage refusals or that require the dog to “seek out” the front plane of the obstacle should generally be avoided.

**What is a Closed Approach?-**

Approaches to obstacles can be open or closed, and various levels of these. An open approach is where the approach to a contact obstacle or jump is from straight on or nearly straight in front of the obstacle. The correct entry point is in view. Level of difficulty may be increased by changing the angle of the jump or the angle of approach. A Closed approach is when the approach to an obstacle is not presented to the dog from his dismount of the previous obstacle. An extreme closed approach would be where the back of the obstacle is the correct direction, (whereas to the dog the front is the correct option).

The diagram compares the range of approaches to a jump varying from Open Approaches (perpendicular to mild) and Closed Approaches (moderate to highly angled) to extreme approaches.



Grade A.

**Course Challenges: Grade A should include 5-8 challenges.**

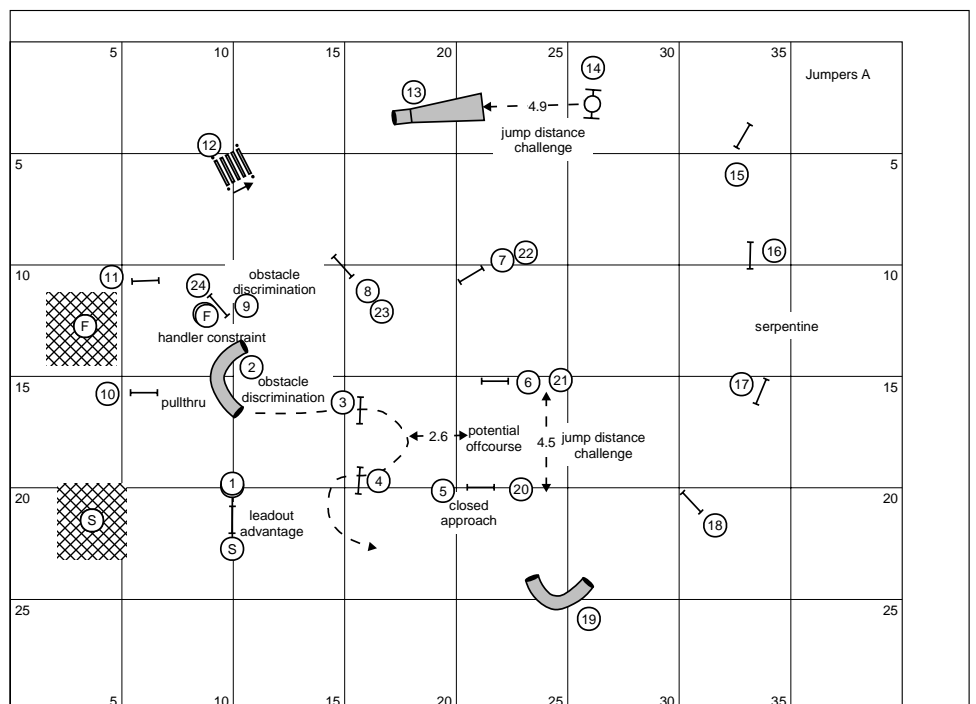
*Course design shall emphasize accomplished training for efficient Response and Directional Control, complemented with refined handling skills to encourage faster rates of speed while progressing fluidly through the course. Although the Grade A level is expected to contain multiple challenges, a course should never be so loaded with challenges that it creates an excessively stressful round. The overall effect should be a balance of control and fluidity. A well handled suitable level Grade A Jumpers run should still look flowing, fluid and enjoyable for handler and dog.*

Challenges.

All challenges defined in grade C and B are appropriate at this level. In addition the following challenges are permitted.

**Managed Approach** – obstacle placement such that the handler must send or escort the dog to a point that the front plane of obstacle comes into the dog’s view.

**Refusal Potential** – A combination of obstacle placement and expected approach speed that may increase the risk of refusal. A Closed Approach to an obstacle is a typical characteristic that leads to increased Refusal Potential. These



combined with design challenges involving Response Control, Wrong Course Potential or Obstacle Discrimination can further raise the level of difficulty of this form of challenge.

**Timing Sequences** – a sequence of the course where the handler must execute two or more commands or manoeuvres in succession or concurrently, with correct timing of each individual manoeuvre being a key element in accomplishing the full sequence. An inherent characteristic is that the level of difficulty increases dramatically with speed, which often means a higher degree of “Response Control” is also required.

### **Compound Challenges with Timing Sequences are encouraged**

Challenges should include compound challenges, such as Changes of Side to effect a change of direction while moving through crossing patterns where the timing of command and/or movement may create a refusal or off course condition.

## **RING LAYOUTS.**

The regulations clearly lay out the requirements for a ring and assembly area. They are not optional, and the Judge should ensure they are erected as per the regulations. This will help ensure

- safety of dogs starting their run
- safety of dogs finishing their run
- safety of other dogs and people
- efficiency of the class

### *5.4.7 Event Area*

*The event area must measure not less than 40m x 30m and have a non-slip surface, to the satisfaction of the judge on the day. The ring must be demarcated by a rope or fence which must be off the ground on all 4 sides with two separate gateways provided through which the dogs are to enter and exit. **The integrity of the ringrope must be maintained through the duration of each class.***

*Event organisers may apply to the NZKC Agility Committee for an exemption to the minimum ring size should the physical characteristics of their venue so require.*

***An assembly area** will be set up along one whole side (or end) of each ring. The assembly area must be 3-5m wide, roped or fenced off and will be used to accommodate the dog which has just run the course as well as the next dog to start. Food and toys will be permitted in the assembly area.*

*Personnel and equipment that pertain to the running of any class may be located within the assembly area, but must be located in such position so as to not impede upon the entry and exit of the dog to and from the assembly area.*

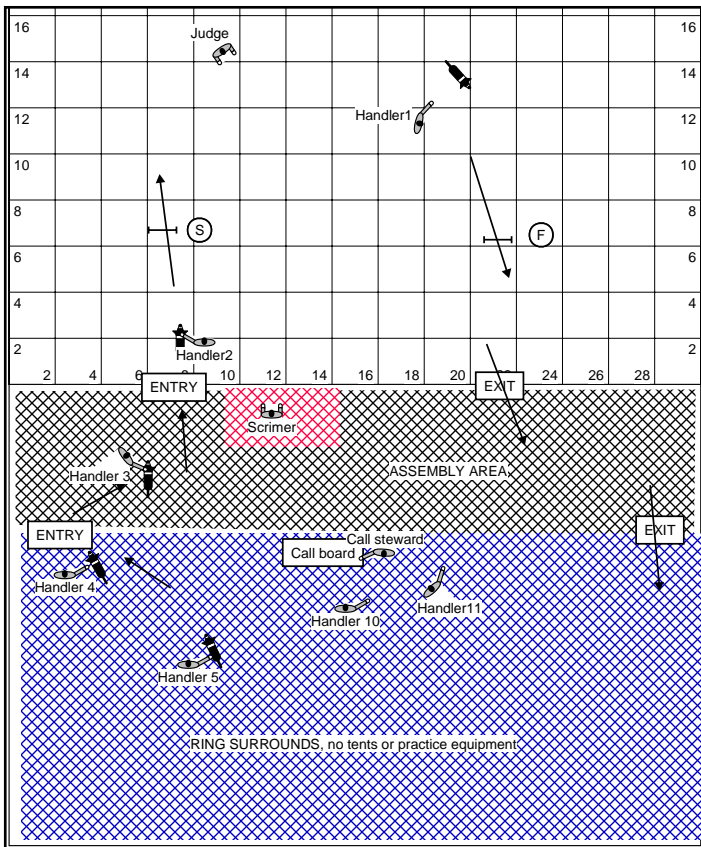
*A dog must be on lead when it enters the assembly area prior to its run and must also be on lead prior to exiting the assembly area at the completion of its run. It is the responsibility of the Event Management to ensure that leads are available to the handler at the completion of their run.*

Handlers and event management may need to be made aware of this regulation – it was introduced to assist the safety of dogs finishing and beginning their run – some of you might remember before this was brought in we would set our dogs up and someone would walk (with a dog on lead) in front of the dog. Sometimes the next person to run would appear suddenly from a crowd of dogs and people, attempting to get a fast start to their run!

Please send any feedback/ideas/plans etc for the next info letter to  
kpdewit@xtra.co.nz

## RING SETUP.

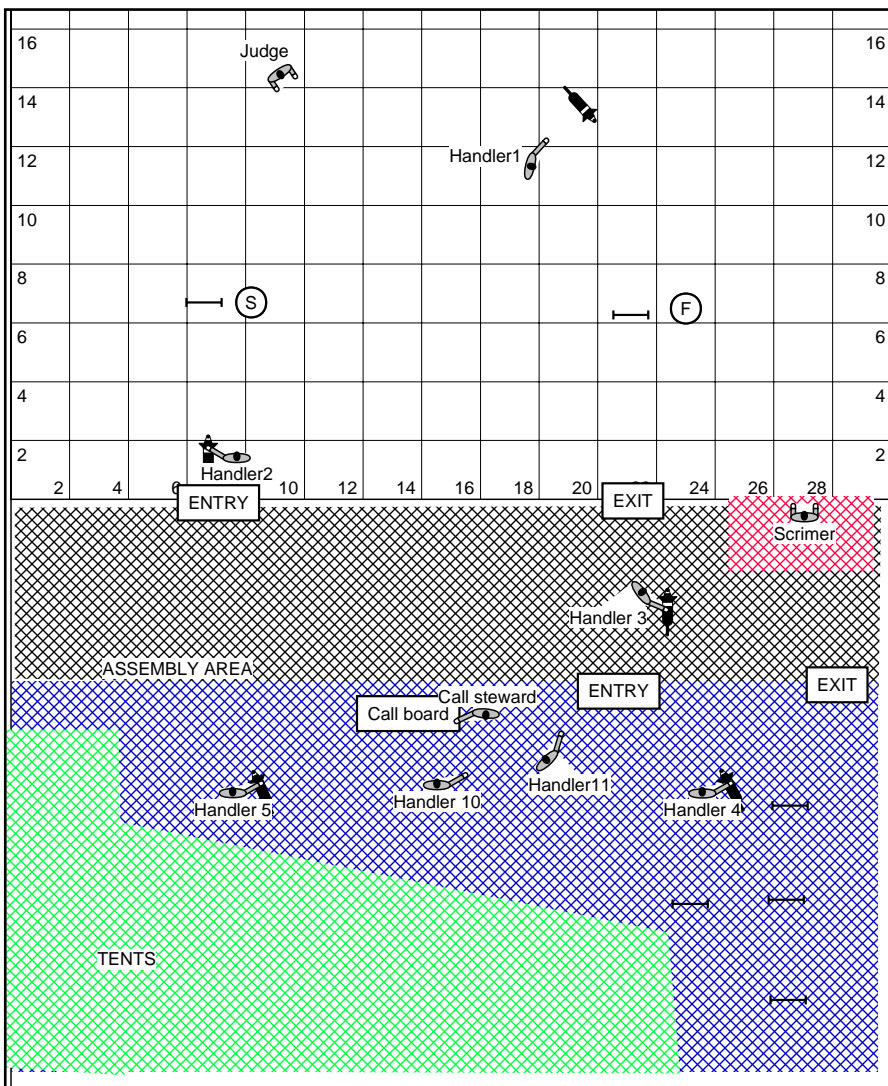
The size of the ring and the size/position of the assembly area are regulated and are a requirement of all Clubs at all events.



It is essential that Judges check to see the ring and assembly area are set out correctly.

To help ensure smooth flow into and out of the ring as well as minimise the chance of aggressive displays, the following additional advice is given:-

1. Call board should be OUTSIDE the assembly area
2. Call board should be near the start/entrance to the assembly area to ensure smooth flow into the assembly area and ring. (See Diagram one)
3. Scrimmer should be close to the dogs starting to ensure good communication (where there is a scrimers assistant this is less essential)
4. Dogs going into the ring should not cross the path of dogs exiting the ring.
5. Dogs going into the assembly area to the start line should not cross the path of dogs leaving the ring and entering the assembly area



**Diagram Two (left) shows an example of a poor ring setup**

List at least four things that could be improved, and how you would improve them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

1. Scrimmer in poor position away from start, hard to communicate with handlers about to start.
2. Call Board is outside the ring but in a poor position, handlers are entering the ring as dogs are exiting the course.
3. Tents are too close to the assembly area increasing congestion.
4. There is practice equipment very close to the ring.