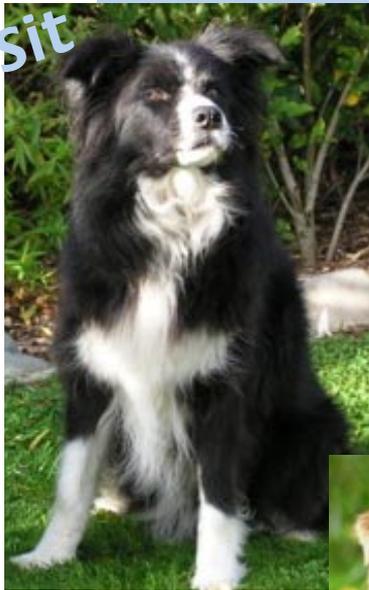




Kiwi Dog Agility



Bad Manners

I don't know what it is about Miniature Schnauzers but we have had more than our share of incidents with dogs seemingly taking a dislike to the breed and in recent weeks little Jayme has been on the wrong end of some pretty rude behaviour.

This has set me to wondering if there is something about small dogs that attracts unwanted attention. Maybe it has something to do with their size or in Jayme's situation it might be the dark colour or perhaps as in Josie's case the noise she makes hooning around obviously having a series of Adrenalin rushes.

But then again, I have friends in the sport with well behaved dogs that prance around and bark and bow and lunge in fun without them wanting to chase to submission, sometimes resulting in the loss of a hunk of fur or worse.

Maybe there are clubs that allow dogs to practise off lead when they are obviously not under the control of the handler and represent a constant danger to the other students. Some of us find it hard to commit as much time as we ought to our training and as a consequence fail to maximise our dog's full potential. Imagine then the frustration when the effort is made and one senseless act of careless behaviour has an effect on a sensitive animal that may need days or weeks of work to get back the confidence generated over a number of months of effort.

Having attended a number of Greg Derrett's seminars and become something of an evangelist to the cause of "Foundation Training" I find it absolutely astounding that clubs would allow a dog to begin work on Agility skill training when the handler does not have the dog's focus and has no ability to recall the dog should it lose concentration on the job at hand.

I am all too aware how difficult it is to get folk to volunteer to take training classes but I would like to recommend that no dog should be entitled to move on to a class involving "off lead" skills training until the handler can demonstrate (with distractions) that the dog will recall when commanded. End of story, no buts, no maybe. NO RECALL - NO TRAINING

And beyond that there is another dimension that is worthy of stressing. When the student has completed his or her exercise the instructor should allow time for the handler to attach the lead to their dog before starting to explain the good and bad elements of how the exercise was completed. It's not much use having a good recall if due to inattention, your dog is already harassing another dog before the handler is even aware. MANNERS PLEASE

Lyn Sayers

Sharky's Diary – Chapter Thirteen

Only 2 more diaries to go, and as per usual I am doing this well past the time it should have been completed! I have enjoyed writing these each month, and it has certainly kept me on track and challenged me to think about what I should be training. Hopefully next month I might include some success stories with highlights of Sharky's first runs, and maybe even a ribbon (I might have to delay the final chapter until we get one!). But what I need to keep in mind is that Sharky is a young dog, and as a team we are bound to get it wrong a few times. Even though I have proofed a lot of his behaviours in many different places, this will still be different to the experience that we gain in the ring.

Over the last weekend I took the opportunity to do a bit of training at the club I was at. The sequence that I was doing had a hoon into a collapsible tunnel, then a hard 180 degree right turn to the weaves. I was doing a front cross at the weaves, and Sharky missed the 2nd pole a couple of times because he was going so fast. So like a right plonker, the next time I asked him to weave I said "steady". Now this is a command that Sharky has only really heard in association with a see-saw, so quite rightly he came running back to me with a "wot?" look on his face. So when we start competing I have to remember what I have taught him, as well as to take things easy.

At home I proof the weaves from a variety of entrances, and we have a high success rate. But, there is a huge variation in the weaves at different clubs. 2 weeks ago I was at the Nationals in Christchurch and the weaves in the practise ring seemed to be very flexible and Sharky was bounced out of them a couple of times, so I learnt that I shouldn't push Sharky too hard to weave fast on unfamiliar equipment. Then last weekend at Tauranga, the weaves were quite stiff so again I needed to let Sharky find his own speed and rhythm.

I am still very happy with Sharky's concentration. If he is training with me, he is not interested in anything going on around him. He is also quite calm when watching other dogs doing agility and will just stand and watch (though he finds his special friends a bit more exciting and likes to have a toy in his mouth as a pacifier). I still try to have food and toy rewards with me every time I have him out at a show and reward him often for good behaviour.

At this stage I leave him in either a "sit" or "stand" when leading out because I am unsure what is the better position for him to start in. Though both positions are quite solid, I can fool him into breaking his "stand sometimes but not the "sit". Because of this, I will start him in a "sit" in his first few runs and see how he goes. I have recently done some more work on proofing his "stands" which has worked well. Something that I do to proof "waits" is based on the Rachel Sanders DVD "Bridging the Gap". This proofing is done on the flat and can be practised easily at shows before going into the ring, but the idea is that it can translate to the position that the dog is holding at the end of the contact. This is great training if you are expecting a stopped position on the contacts. But, even without a stopped position on contacts, it

is a great way to proof the controlled wait that your dog has. I would only start doing this once you have a good wait with whatever criteria you have set for your dog. Sharky's criteria is that he is not allowed to move any of his feet while in a wait.

The steps to go through are done with the dog in a down, sit and stand. I would always start in the position that the dog is most comfortable in. Start from a couple of metres behind your dog, walk past dog, then release while moving. Dog should know your release command and be given a reward when he comes to you – a tug toy is great for this exercise. Sometimes when walking past, don't release dog, go back and reward. Then go on and mix up the following parameters:

Parameter 1	Parameter 2	Parameter 3	Parameter 4
Dog in down	Handler walking	Moving past dog	On flat
Dog sitting	Handler jogging	Moving level with dog, stop, then move on again	Leadout to a jump
Dog standing	Handler sprinting	Move past dog, do a front cross, then release	Position on the contact

This is an exercise that all dogs would benefit from, and when done on the flat can be a great game for you and your dog. Remember to go back and reward often for a nice held wait, and when you release and dog comes to you, you need to have a really good play session.

I still find shows a great place to train and proof behaviours. Because Sharky has been doing this most of his life, I am not expecting him to get worried about his first experience in the ring.

I have learnt a lot in training Sharky and following is what I think have been the most important things that I have trained which have helped me along the way:

Having a good wait and proofing it in any position in every location that I can find.

Having a good release command that is different to words I would generally say so I don't say it by mistake, and proofing it a lot.

Having good food and play drive – I use these in different situations and to me it is a necessity in training. Once you have play drive, then you spend a lot less energy training in the future. It is well worth the effort early on.

Lots of socialisation with other dogs and people – this means that Sharky is more likely to continue focussing on me in unusual situations.

Teaching Sharky to offer behaviours – the sillier the better. Because he has become a thinking dog, he is much easier to train new behaviours.

And the final thing that really helps me is having a clear vision of the end behaviour that I want. Sharky's weaves are very good, and what I visualised them to be. We will need to continue training and proofing these, but the action and enthusiasm are great. I am also very pleased with his contact behaviour – he knows what to do when he runs on the contact equipment, and doesn't need (or know) a command to adopt his end behaviour. I have been watching a lot of dog runs from overseas lately on youtube and possibly I might train a future dog differently. But, the behaviour I have got is what I initially visualised and I have to be happy with achieving that.

So I intend to start competing remembering that I have a baby dog that won't do everything perfectly from the start, and that every run is another learning opportunity.

So fingers are crossed for me and the darkie boy (yep, gotta have a silly pet name that I have avoided disclosing so far – at least it is a bit better than sweetie boy?)

Fiona Ferrar

New AD and ADX Advanced courses

First in the country to use the modified courses was OCTC who arranged for both to be run on the Saturday morning of their triple held over the first weekend in October just pipping Tauranga who ran theirs later in the weekend.

This is a timely reminder that all Agility held in New Zealand can now be electronically timed and in keeping with the modern era all the new courses are available on the Agility website,

<http://www.dogagility.org.nz/forms.html>

Lyn Sayers

Trans Tasman Challenge

Following the visit to Adelaide by a hardy group of agiliteers last year the idea was born that we should set up an Agility Trans Tasman Challenge. Reg Dwyer from NSW had floated the idea that since the Aussie Agility Nationals now happen only every second year it seemed like a good idea to have the new "Challenge" alternate and be every second year and be held in the Aussie's off year.

Next year there is no National event in Australia so planning began in earnest but although we received virtually immediate approval from the NZKC the Australians found their path to approval not so easy as their State system puts all the power at the ANKC national office in the hands of the State representatives all of whom at this stage are from the Conformation discipline.

President John Perfect had met his counterpart in Australia on numerous occasions and was able to help expedite a favourable decision but now our Australian counterparts feel that the time is too short to arrange the first such event in 2009.

Unless something can be resurrected very quickly it now looks like the first such opportunity for a Trans Tasman Agility Challenge will be in 2011 - the year of the NZKC's 125th Anniversary.

Lyn Sayers



Your sport needs you

In the very near future the NZKC will be calling for nominations for interested members to put their names forward for the Agility Committee elections to be held in April next year. From what I can gather, a number of the current committee are unlikely to put their names forward so it is obvious we will need a number of strong candidates to fill the vacancies.



One obvious disadvantage of a national system of governance is that whilst individual candidates might be well know in their own club and historical zone, some folk choose not to travel widely and as a result could have a low profile in places distant despite maybe having serious credentials.

The last election caught us all a little off guard and by the time folk had decided to put their names forward there was no time to allow space in the Gazette for candidates to put forward their individual pre-election manifesto.

By the time this edition is published there will be a couple of weeks before editorial copy closes for the December - January issue and any person wishing to write a biography and lay out their personal strengths and aspirations for the new committee are welcome to submit copy.