



First in NZ - Championship Jumpers competition

Upper Hutt Dog Training School - 1st January 2009

by Karen de Wit - Photos by Karen de Wit

A very bright bunch of agility enthusiasts marked the start of the New Year by limiting their alcoholic intake on New years eve, and rising in time to put their dogs in the car and drive to Upper Hutt for the start of the first ever Championship Jumpers event at 10.30am. There were over 300 entries in six classes with competitors from as far away as Christchurch and Auckland.

There were three opportunities for every dog to shine and many of them took the most of their chances, none more so than a very impressive Doberman called Samson, handled by Colleen O'Connor from Hastings, who picked up two seconds and a win in Grade C giving them 28 points and taking home the TOP DOG ribbon.

Close runner-up was Emma and Christine Harber from Waipawa who won the first two C grade classes, qualifying out of C grade into B grade and picking up the JD title on the way – the first to do so in NZ.

The results were shared around a bit more evenly in Grade B, with Rebecca Sidwell winning two – one with Mya and one with Seeka. Louise Williams won the third class with Bee. Linda Guinness and Bucca were most consistent in Grade B with two 4ths and a 5th.

The day started with a bit of history, Peter de Wit outlining the path from Agility's arrival in NZ to the start of the championship Jumpers classes, excerpts from his talk follow....

"In NZ, our sport started, in the mid 80's. The rules from the UK were copied however although the UK had agility AND jumpers from the start, only the Agility rules were copied into NZ rules. The classes we had then were Starters and Open. Since then every year, this great sport has changed.

Agility Link started in 1989 and from the early years featured a jumpers course twice a year. At this time the Agility Judges panel was formed.

During the 1990's a number of changes occurred such as addition of Novice, then Senior, and Open was changed to Intermediate. AD was introduced. The Teams event at the NDTA was created in 1989 and changed to a 3 dog team in 1991 and then to a four dog team in 1997. Midi was introduced. In 1995, ribbon events were established in addition to what were then known as official events. In 1997 the jumps for Maxi were reduced from 760mm down to 675 which we still use.

In 1997 as people became dissatisfied with the NZKC system, there were moves to split agility off. This led to a change in the Dog Training Committee and Agility gained Championship status in 1998.

Since 2000 change our sport has continued to develop. In 2001 ADX was created. In 2002 splits were introduced and occurred at Taupo for the first time. In 2003 Agility Grand Champ was created. In 2003 The jumpers series held by Napier/HB/Feilding and DAWG started.

In 2005 a review of Agility commenced and the Agility Working party was formed. A survey on all matters agility was distributed and the response was fantastic. In 2006 the NZKC ACOD passed the resolutions to split Agility from Obedience. In 2007 the zones ratified the Agility Governance structure and the first election was held. The first ever agility committee came into being in June 2007.

In Jan 2008 the competitions proposals were released for discussion and later in the year new regulations for Agility were passed.

Today, January 1st, 2009, these regulations come into being and we celebrate that with the first ever Championship JUMPERS events. Join with me in cutting the ribbon and walking the first ever championship jumpers competition!" He then cut the ribbon across the entry to the ring and the first course was run.

After the first two classes had been completed the Club held a prize-giving where some special certificates were presented. Fiona Hodgson received one for being the first person to enter the competition. Paul Taylor and "Comet" were the first to get a clear round on a Grade C course. Emma and Christine Harber were the first winners of Grade C, and Rebecca Sidwell and Mya were the first winners of Grade B.

Later in the day a cake that had been decorated by Karen de Wit to look like a Jumpers course was cut by Lyn Sayers, Chairperson of the NZKC Agility committee and Fiona Hodgson, who was the first secretary of the NZKC Agility committee.

Wineglasses that had been engraved to commemorate the event were presented to the first three place-getters in each class, and special clear round certificates were presented to those who gained no course faults or time faults. There were many people who gained clear rounds and they have all now made progress towards the JD title and JDX title.

Karen and Peter de Wit, who dreamed up the idea of holding the event on New Years day were thrilled with the response. Peter commented "I am thrilled that so many people came along to celebrate the first jumpers event." and Karen, who also judged two classes, was impressed with the speed of the dogs and the glee with which they tackled the "No weave, no contacts" courses.

Danny Gotlieb, who judged all the Grade B courses on the weekend, writes, "On the first day of January 2009 I was privileged enough to be asked to judge the First Championship Jumpers B courses in New Zealand, held at the Upper Hutt Dog Training School. I had pondered for few weeks prior to the show as to what designs for courses I should submit as to the levels that have been set by the Agility Training Committee. With the introduction of the new Agility Regulations 2009 and a sneak preview of the Jumpers Guidelines documentation, I set to work to design my interpretation of what a Jumpers course should contain. My interpretations of these courses are that they should be a fast flowing course with enough obstacle selections to make them a reasonable challenge for the dogs and handlers.

A lot of dogs that ran these courses seemed to have no problem adjusting to the style of courses from what currently being run at agility shows, and also making the course times allowed under the new formulas. I look forward to seeing over the next few years how course designs will progress, and how handlers will apply new skills to their training, with the introduction of the new Jumpers Class Competitions."

Louise Williams, one of the competitors, commented afterwards: "I'm so excited jumpers is official. I'm sure lots of people went home very happy. Thanks for a great day". And Helen Fabling agreed "I would also like to thank the Upper Hutt club for an enjoyable day on 1st Jan 2009. The courses were great and even my second dog Harley made it clear giving him a chance to ONE day make it as a JD dog! Again - thanks for a great day, great weather, great crowd and great courses." ■