



From Shed to Start Line: How the COF Protects Our Sport

We've all been through the Warrant of Fitness (WOF) routine — drop the car off, hope for the best, and drive away knowing it was safe on that day. But the moment you're back on the road, things start changing again. Tyres wear. Bolts loosen. A mystery rattle appears out of nowhere. The WOF didn't fail — life just happened.

Agility equipment is exactly the same

Think of the Dogs New Zealand Equipment Certificate of Fitness (COF) as Agility's version of a WOF. Trained assessors take a proper, independent look at a club's equipment, making sure it's safe, consistent, and meets the current regulations. It's not about catching anyone out, it's about making sure the gear we all rely on is ready for training, competition, and everything in between.

Each year, the COF tour heads to whichever Zone is hosting New Zealand Dog Agility Championships. Because NZDAC rotates through the five Zones, the COF checks rotate with it, meaning a different part of the country gets its turn each year. It's a straightforward way to make sure the host Zone's equipment is in great shape before the big event.

The COF: Our national safety baseline

The COF is the one moment when Agility equipment is assessed by someone whose role is solely to check safety and compliance, not to run the event. Most of the time, that's a trained assessor from outside the club, providing a neutral, safety-focused perspective.

In some cases, and only with Agility Committee approval, a suitably experienced club member may carry out the inspection. But the expectation doesn't change: the assessment must be objective, thorough, and aligned with the national standard. What matters

is the independence of the judgement — not who holds the clipboard.

That independence gives:

- Handlers confidence their dogs are running on safe, consistent equipment.
- Judges' confidence the gear meets national expectations.
- Clubs' clarity about what's right and what needs attention.
- The sport a shared standard from Northland to Southland.

Without the COF, we'd quickly end up with a patchwork of 'near enough' equipment and local interpretations. The COF keeps us aligned.

But the COF is only correct on the day

Just like a WOF, the COF is a snapshot. It tells us the equipment met the standard on inspection day. But once that gear goes back into everyday use — dragged across fields, stored in sheds, rained on, dried out, and run over by hundreds of dogs — things can shift. And they do.

Contact chip peels. A tunnel fabric fraying. A hurdle cup distorts and sags. None of this means the equipment was 'wrong' at COF time, it's simply the reality of a sport that uses its gear hard and often.

That's why the COF is the foundation, not the finish line.

The shared responsibility that keeps Agility safe

Once the assessor signs off the equipment, the responsibility moves to the people who use it week in, week out.

Clubs

Clubs need to keep an eye on their gear through the year. If something cracks, warps, loosens, or starts looking tired, it needs attention. A COF isn't a five-year guarantee, it's a starting point.

Judges

Before any event begins, judges are expected to check the equipment and make sure it's still safe and still within spec. It's the Agility version of a pilot's pre-flight walk-around: quick, practical, essential.

Championship events

For Championship Shows, clubs must have a full set of standard obstacles available and in good condition. Not 'most of them', not 'the ones that survived last season'. All of them — and all compliant.

Tight tolerances, consistent standards

Accurate measurements within the tolerance range keep obstacle behaviour predictable for every dog, at every event.

Support for clubs: Bringing equipment up to standard

One of the strengths of the COF system is that it doesn't just point out what needs fixing, it also connects clubs with support to help make those improvements. The Agility Committee knows equipment is expensive, clubs vary in size and resources, and

sometimes a COF report highlights issues that weren't in the budget. That's why the Agility Committee Equipment Grant exists.

The grant helps clubs buy or replace equipment so they can meet the national standard. It's practical, straightforward support that makes a genuine difference for clubs trying to keep their gear safe and compliant.

How the grant works:

- Considered twice a year, in June and December.
- Applications due by 1 June or 1 December.
- Covers up to 50% of the cost of approved equipment.
- Clubs can apply for up to two grants per year, up to \$1000 total.
- Once approved, funds are paid within seven days of the Committee meeting.
- The Committee's decision on the amount granted is final.

To be eligible, clubs must also be involved in the sport's wider development, taking part in training sessions, conferences, and support programmes run by the Agility Committee. It ensures financial help goes hand-in-hand with upskilling and best practice.

The message is simple: the COF isn't about catching clubs out. It's about lifting the standard of equipment across the country, and the Agility Committee is committed to helping clubs get there.

From shed to start line: Every step matters

When you put it all together, the system is straightforward:

- The COF gives us a national baseline.
- Judges' checks keep events safe on the day.
- Clubs' ongoing care keeps equipment safe the rest of the year.
- The Equipment Grant helps clubs meet the standard when budgets are tight.

It's a shared commitment, and when everyone plays their part, the sport thrives.

The Equipment COF isn't just a rule, it's a promise. A promise that every dog stepping into the ring can trust the equipment beneath them. A promise that every handler can run with confidence. A promise that every club is part of a national standard that protects the sport we love.

From the shed to the start line, the COF works quietly in the background, keeping Agility safe, fair, and consistent — one inspection, one check, and one obstacle at a time. 🐾

Wayne Turner

Agility Committee Vice Chair & Treasurer

Equipment & COF Liaison



Off Course with Chris

If agility has taught us anything, it should be that best-laid plans often involve a sudden, mid-course change. You think you're heading for a clear round, and then BAM! your dog finds a jump in the corner of the ring that seems far more enticing, and you're suddenly re-routing your plans to keep them from DQ'ing.

The recent decision to move the Zone 2 NZDAC from October to March is exactly that - a re-route. It's about buying some breathing room for the organising committee, and for competitors.

I know, I know, for some, this news landed like a refusal at the final jump on what was a clear round.. There's been plenty of 'spirited' debate (to put it politely) about the move. But everyone needs to just take a breath and look at the line we're actually running, without a crystal ball at hand.

Decisions like this aren't made lightly, and I promise you, no one sat in a meeting room plotting how to ruin your holiday plans. Is there a guarantee that things will be better by March? Of course not. In fact, it could be worse. Who knows? But one thing I am sure of is that all the keyboard warriors out there who think they have all the answers sure as hell don't know where this global crap is going either.

As the world stage continues to resemble an episode of Shortland Street (terribly scripted with crap acting), let's not forget to enjoy the ride as well. Generally speaking this sport has a good sense of community vibes and good feels, run mostly by "voluntolds", and we are lucky to be a part of it.

Yes it's frustrating. But put the pitchforks away, fill up the water bowls and focus on the dogs. Look at it this way: it gives you more time to train those weaves you've been avoiding.

And on a brighter note — literally, because there is a lot of colour right there — how many of you managed to do last month's **NZ Agility Connections** puzzle? The answers are below.

Chris Richardson

AC Chair and EC Agility Representative

TYPES OF HANDLING MANUEVERS

FRONT CROSS, JAPANESE, SERPENTINE, THREADLE

MEMBERS OF THE JUDGES SUBCOMMITTEE

BALL (Erin), BARLOW (Liz), DALE (Justine), TAYLOR (Paul)

START OF PAST AGILITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS SURNAMES

BAKE (Rosemarie Baker), BANK (Clint Banks), CHEST (Nick & Steve Chester), JOHN (Phil Johnson)

COMMANDS I HAVE HEARD ON THE COURSE WHILE JUDGING

BACK DOOR, BOTTOM, HUBBA BUBBA, SWING