

AGILITY INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS

Agility is a dog sport based on show jumping, which involves a dog running a course which includes jumps, tunnels and contact obstacles. The challenge of agility is for the handler to communicate the correct course to the dog by voice and body signals. CDC has been involved in agility since the beginning of the sport in the early '90's.

CDC runs multiple agility classes per week, graded from Beginners to Masters. The classes are held weekday evenings, and the day and time depends on which skill level the dog has reached. Each session runs for 8 weeks, in line with the club's obedience classes. The lower levels focus on teaching the dog to become familiar with the equipment, and once this is achieved, the handler is taught various handling techniques to enable fast and accurate communication with the dog to achieve a smooth and fast run.

Once handler/dog teams acquire a certain level of skill, we encourage participation in trials. These are special events where teams from various clubs compete in a friendly fashion. There are different levels of competition at each trial, with an entry level (Novice), a middle level (Excellent) and the highest level (Masters). To graduate up the levels, the team needs to complete a certain number of qualifying runs, that is, runs with no faults and within the time limit. Every course designed by the judge is different so there is always a fresh challenge for dogs and handlers alike. It is great fun, and dogs and handlers really enjoy themselves.

To enable dogs to successfully and safely train in agility, the dog needs to:

1. Be over 14 months old, for skeletal maturity.
2. At a suitable weight, which is possibly lighter than the average pet.
3. Come reliably when called off-lead.

Handlers need to be prepared to:

1. Use positive training methods endorsed by the club.
2. Help setup/put away the agility equipment, some of which is awkward and/or heavy. If you have physical limitations there are many lighter items that you will be able to manage.
2. Practice handling techniques at home.

Registration for Agility Classes.

To register interest in attending our classes at CDC:

1. Complete and submit the Agility Intake Application form, available at the office or on the club website. Your name will be put on the waiting list. When your name comes up, a member of the agility subcommittee will contact you via the details you have provided, and invite you to attend the next intake night. This may take a few months, depending on demand.
2. Attend the intake night, which includes assessment (details following) and a short introductory lecture. The assessment will involve:

- a) A control test, to assess the amount of control you have when your dog is off-lead and when there are other dogs around. You are allowed to use voice/toys/food to encourage your dog to come when called.
- b) A temperament test, to assess dogs' reaction to being in close proximity to unfamiliar dogs.
- c) A fitness test, to ensure your dog does not have any visible musculo-skeletal problems that may be exacerbated by jumping/landing. If there is some concern, the Agility Subcommittee may request a check by a qualified veterinarian.
- d) A weight check to ensure that doing agility will not place undue strain on your dog's joints. (See attached article "Corpulent Canines" by Chris Zink). There is no weight test for handlers!

Preparation for agility classes

Since it usually takes at least a few months for your name to reach the top of the waiting list, it is a good idea to start some simple training exercises with your dog.

1. Practice quick but reliable sit or drop stays, with the handler going about 5-10m away, for 15-30 seconds, returning to the dog, rewarding, and repeating 3-4 times. This will be of great benefit when you start training your dog on the equipment.
2. Practise walking and handling your dog on your right side. Heeling on the left is great for obedience, but successful agility dogs are comfortable being handled on the left or right side of their handler. Make a game of switching sides and reward you dog on each side.
3. Watch your dog's weight. His ribs should be easily felt, and he should have a "waist". Make use of the dog-weighing scales in the clubhouse to check your dog's weight.
4. Teach your dog to tug on a toy or a plaited rope. Start with something very soft. Tugging creates arousal which can then be used to motivate your dog to play the agility game.
5. Practice recalling your dog when there are other dogs around. Reward generously every time!

We look forward to welcoming you to our agility group.

CDC Agility Subcommittee
2014.



Corpulent Canines?

Chris Zink, DVM, PhD

Our dogs depend on us to put food in their bowls. And, more often than not, we are putting in too much! I have assessed the weight on hundreds of dogs of a variety of breeds over the past year at seminars all over the country and a conservative estimate is that about 50% of the dogs that I see are overweight; approximately 25% are actually obese. These are not couch potato dogs. These are dogs whose owners expect them to jump in obedience, to run over rough ground in retrieving tests, and to perform in agility. And we are seeing the sad results: ruptured anterior cruciate ligaments (often both legs), severe degenerative arthritis in dogs in their prime, degenerative disk disease, and many more conditions that are caused by, or exacerbated by, excess weight.

Why are so many working dogs overweight? The following are some possible answers to this difficult question:

1. Keeping a dog at working weight is incompatible with showing in conformation. I have never understood why dogs whose breed standard states that they should be shown in "hard working condition" don't win in the conformation ring unless they are FAT. The only thing that I can think of is that we are mistaking fat for muscle. For breeds such as Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers, assume that if your dog is winning in the conformation ring, it is probably about 8 to 15 lb. overweight. When you are finished showing your dog in conformation, take the weight off, for his own good.
2. People are feeding their dogs the same amount of food they were fed as adolescents. This is a common mistake. But just as most of us eat less now than we did as teenagers, your dog needs less too. A dog's metabolism slows down with age and adult dogs need less food to maintain their weight.
3. People believe the suggested feeding regimens that are printed on dog food bags. Even the most active dog doesn't need as much food as most dog food companies recommend. The best way to determine how much food a dog needs is to feed it the amount that maintains its weight. This is a matter of trial and error.
4. The dog has been less active, but he is being fed the same amount of food. Adjust your dog's intake to his activity level. Remember that in the winter your dog may not get as much exercise and decrease his intake accordingly. [Editor's note: In Australia you probably need to decrease food in summer because the dogs are less active]
5. People don't know how to determine the correct weight for their dogs. Dogs vary in height, bone structure, and muscularity, so there is no one correct weight for a dog of any given breed. The best way to determine whether a dog is overweight is to test 3 different parts of the body: the neck, the ribs, and the hips.
 - a. To check the neck, press your thumb and index finger deep into the side of the neck just ahead of the shoulder, and pinch them together. If your fingers are more than 1/2" apart, the dog is overweight. (Note: this is where old dogs tend to carry most of their excess fat, and they may actually be thin in other locations.)
 - b. To check the ribs, stand with your dog beside you, facing his butt. Place your thumb on the middle of his spine half way down the back and spread your fingers out over his last few ribs. Then run your fingers up and down along his skin. You should be able to feel the bumps of his ribs without pressing in.
 - c. To check the hips, run your hand over your dog's croup. You should be able to feel the bumps of his two pelvic bones without pressing down.Some of you may be reading this and thinking, "I would never want my dog to be that skinny!" Think about the Olympic athletes. If you want your dog to be an athlete then it is only fair that you do what you can to help him achieve the body that he will need to perform and stay healthy and injury free for many years.



6. People worry that their dogs will not get enough nutrition if they feed them less. Premium dog foods are packed with nutrients. If your dog is overweight, unless he has a hormonal problem (e.g. hypothyroidism), he is getting too much nutrition, and cutting back will not put him in jeopardy. Remember: just like humans, individual dogs vary in their metabolic rate and some dogs just need less food.
7. People don't know how to get their dogs to lose weight without all the side effects —begging, that sad-eyed look that says "I'm hungry", etc. Try the pumpkin diet. Reduce your dog's regular food by 33% and replace it with a 67% volume of canned pumpkin (not the kind with sugar and spices, ready-made for pies). For example, if you are currently feeding your dog 3 cups of food, you would instead feed him 2 cups of food and a whole cup of canned pumpkin. Dogs love the pumpkin—it has the texture of canned dog food, it provides vitamins and roughage, it makes them feel full (so they don't forage in the yard for leftovers), and they lose weight! [Editor's note: grated pumpkin or carrot can also be used in this manner]
8. The vet said that the dog was a good weight (or even underweight). I have asked many vets why they don't tell their clients that their dogs are overweight, and I always get the same answer: "I have lost so many clients because they were offended when I told them their dogs were overweight that I just don't tell them anymore". So please, don't be offended—it doesn't reflect on you personally.

The following is a 'real life' example. Julie Daniels, a well-known agility competitor, was showing her female Rottweiler, Jessy, in conformation. After she got her first major (5 points), Julie decided that she would rather compete with Jessy in agility. Now Rottweilers are not ideally structured for agility. So she took 21 lb (yes 21 lb.—this is not a typo) off the dog. The dog looked lovely, and in the process lost 1 1/2" in height at the withers. (For many medium-sized dogs this could mean the difference between having to jump 26" and 22" in agility.) Jessy is the all-time top winning Rottweiler in agility (USDAA National Finalist 5 years in a row) and is healthy and injury-free at the age of 10 (and still competing in Veterans).

So why not do this for your best friend?

Reprinted with permission of the author. Chris Zink, D.V.M., Ph.D., is a leading authority on the dog as an athlete and award-winning author of Peak Performance: Coaching the Canine Athlete and Dog Health and Nutrition for Dummies and co-author of Jumping from A to Z: Teach Your Dog to Soar. Chris has put over 60 obedience, agility, retrieving, tracking, and conformation titles on dogs from three different groups. She is a consultant on canine sports medicine and gives seminars worldwide to rave reviews.



ACT COMPANION DOG CLUB Inc

Agility Intake Application

- You must be a member of CDC in order to use the CDC grounds and to take agility and other classes
- Dogs will only be accepted into agility classes after they have been assessed by agility instructors and judged to be fit and healthy. In case of non-acceptance any applicable activity fees will be refunded

You will be contacted regarding your acceptance into the Agility intake process. Please notify the office if you change your contact details. If we cannot contact you, you may lose your place on the Agility waiting list.

Application date: / / Age (if under 16):

Surname: Given name:

Email: Other email:

Mobile: Other phone no:

Address:

Suburb: State: Postcode:

Are you an ACTIVE instructor at CDC? Yes No If yes, discipline:

Please detail any previous agility experience, including titles obtained with this or any dog:

Dog's information

Pet name: Breed: DOB: / /

Obedience level: Male Female Desexed: Yes No

Questionnaire

Your answers to the questions below will not impact your position on the waiting list. The information will be used by the Agility Sub Committee to ensure your experience in agility training is safe and enjoyable.

1. Please detail any disabilities that may impact on your agility training, eg. Damaged knees, hearing impairment
2. What motivates your dog (eg. Toys, food)
3. Tick if your dog has aggressive or reactive issues toward: Other dogs People
4. Has your dog any physical limitations which may impact on training, eg. Past injuries? Yes No
5. Can you easily feel your dog's ribs without pressing firmly? Yes No
6. Does your dog bark excessively when tied up? Yes No

Agility Sub Committee use only

Handler:

Dog:

Invitation to attend Agility intake assessment					
Year / session	Method	Date	Method	Date	Response
/		/ /		/ /	Accept / Decline / Defer / No reply
/		/ /		/ /	Accept / Decline / Defer / No reply
/		/ /		/ /	Accept / Decline / Defer / No reply
Comments:					
Control test					
Date 1: / /	Obedience level:		Pass? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Tester:	
Comments/Issues arising during testing:					
Advice given:					
Date 2: / /	Obedience level:		Pass? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Tester:	
Comments/Issues arising during testing:					
Advice given:					
Physical test					
Date 1: / /	Pass? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		Tester:		
Dog's weight: Thin / Ideal / Slightly overweight / Overweight / Obese					
Issues arising during testing:					
Advice given:					
Date 2: / /	Pass? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		Tester:		
Dog's weight:	Thin / Ideal / Slightly overweight / Overweight / Obese				
Gait:	Smooth / Uneven / Limping				
Jump:	Smooth / Difficulty				
Comments/Issues arising during testing:					
Advice given:					
Intake lecture					
Attended?	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Date: / /	Accepted to start at level:		
Payment received:	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Amount: \$	Method: Cheque / CC / Cash		
Comments:			ASC member initials:		