

Dear Martin,

I am writing in support of your proposal to be presented to Mr Graham Partridge, Board Member and Chair of the Activities Committee, to support the review and reconsideration of the distance between agility obstacles in light of the research recently made available to members of the recently disbanded Activities Health and Welfare Subgroup (AHWSG).

The work was undertaken at Writtle University College (now part of Anglia Ruskin University) by Dr Roberta Blake and was supported by the AHWSG on the basis that outcomes would be made available prior to external peer review and publication. The work has been made available in the form of a preliminary report and is now being prepared for peer review and publication in a relevant scientific journal by the researchers, and as such is effectively under embargo until that time.

However, the access that we have had via the AHWSG means that the results are relevant and pertinent to the current agility community. They also deserve consideration in light of recent concerns in the agility world about approaches to specific pieces of equipment and the maintenance of the health and welfare of canine participants. This is a result of the speed of approach and the distances between obstacles that may permit dogs to reach high speeds, relative to their ability to traverse equipment safely.

I would support you in your request for this work to be taken into immediate consideration for a regulation change to permit a reduction of maximum distance between obstacles (which is should be acknowledged was arbitrary, rather than evidence based when minimum distances were reviewed as a result of research findings championed and supported by several members of the AHWSG) from 10 m to 8 m as a direct way to minimise speed of participating dogs negotiating equipment. This would permit a dynamic alteration of regulations in a responsive way to research findings without the delay that might otherwise be necessitated in working through a new and untested health and welfare committee structure at The Royal Kennel Club.

On this note, it is also worth noting that at present, with the formation of the new Health Advisory Group, it seems that there is no direct way by which the health and welfare of dogs taking part in activities sanctioned and supported by The Royal Kennel Club is examined and monitored at present. I would highlight that this is an area that warrants ongoing review and awareness to mitigate potential reputational risk and also to ensure that approaches are timely and proactive as and when needed for all activities, to support the health and welfare of dogs taking part.

Agility Liaison Council  
16 January  
Item 9.a  
Annex G.i

I trust this is in order.

With best wishes and kind regards

Jackie

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