



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS AT 10.30 AM ON TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT

Ms D Cox*	Midlands
Miss F Godfrey	South East/East Anglia
Mrs S Hyde	Midlands
Mrs D Lavender	North East
Mrs J Le Fevre*	South East/East Anglia
Mr M McCartney	Northern Ireland
Mr J McIntosh*	Scotland
Mr D Moxon*	South/South West
Mrs C Patrick	Scotland
Mrs K Russell*	North West
Ms A Shaw	South East/East Anglia
Mrs B Smith	Midlands
Ms N Thomas*	Wales
Mrs L Turner	South/South West
Mr N Walton	North East

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Head of Canine Activities
Miss C McHardy	Manager - Education, Training, and Working Dog Activities Team
Miss T Collins	Administrator – Working Dog Activities Team
Ms R Mansfield	Committee Secretary – Working Dog Activities Team

* Indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

NOTE: any recommendations made by the Obedience Liaison Council are subject to review by the Activities Committee and The Kennel Club Board, and will not come into effect unless and until Board approval has been confirmed.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies had been received from Mr J Farr and Mrs H Weaver.

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. The Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 as an accurate record.

ITEM 3. KENNEL CLUB RESEARCH PROJECT

3. The Council had been due to receive a presentation from Mr M Bermingham (Interim Strategy & Implementation Executive) which would provide an update on the research project into 'Organisers and Participants of Dog Activities'.
4. Due to the length of the presentation, it had been decided that a separate meeting would be held with members of all relevant councils. The meeting was held on Tuesday 20 February 2024.
5. The Council expressed a wish to see the slides of the presentation, noting that not many Council members had been able to attend the meeting. The office agreed to liaise with Mr Bermingham about this.
6. It was also requested that the recording of the meeting be distributed, and the office agreed to ask whether this would be possible. It was stressed that this would be for Council members only.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Council noted that the Board, at its meeting held on 22 November 2023, had approved the following amendments to regulations:

Regulation G35.d

TO:

Nothing may be carried, worn or displayed by a handler or a dog during judging which is capable of indicating the identity of the dog or owner nor must anything be said, or any action taken which identifies the dog. ~~other than by exhibit number.~~ If requested by the judge or ring steward a handler may (at their choice) disclose their first name and dog's pet name for possible show report use.

(Deletion struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2024)

Regulation G35.k.

TO:

~~Every handler shall ensure that whilst the dog is competing, its correct ring number is displayed.~~

(Deletion struck through. Subsequent regulations to be renumbered)

(Effective 1 January 2024)

Regulation G(D)2.b.(2)

TO:

2. Duties

b. During judging:

- (1) To ensure that all commands are given in the same place and in the same manner for each dog and competitor.
- (2) To ensure each competitor **has gives** the correct ring number for their dog when entering the ring. ~~and that the number is prominently displayed whilst working.~~

(Insertions in bold. Deletion struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2024)

Regulation G(A)9

TO:

G(A) CLASSES

9. Introductory.

- a. This class is to introduce and support newcomers to obedience competition. In this class only incentives in the form of a toy or rewards are allowed to be carried by the handler in the competitive ring and may be given to the dog at the end of an exercise or in between exercises. Rewards include food which must be carried in a small closed container during the exercises. The judge will designate an area in the competitive ring where food may be given to the dog by the handler.
- b. To compete in the Introductory Class a handler or dog must not have gained a 1st place in any obedience class, and have not elected to progress on points from Introductory.
- c. Handlers will not be penalised for encouragement or extra commands in all exercises.
- d. In any exercise attempted the competing team cannot lose all the allocated points for that exercise but must be awarded a minimum of ~~two~~ **one** points for each exercise they have attempted.
- e. The detailed test will be:
 - (1) ~~Play with dog for 15-30 seconds on or off lead at the handler's choice. Handlers may use a silent toy~~ 40 points
Engagement – this will be marked throughout the test – the use of motivators and rewards before and between exercises which may include food, silent toys, tricks, and verbal and physical praise within the reward area of the ring. Toys and food in a sealed container, must either be left on the reward table, or be concealed in the handler's pocket during tests, where only verbal motivation may be used to keep the dog engaged. **10 points**
 - (2) ~~Heel on lead~~ 40 points
Heelwork to be set and marked as 2 distinct exercises:- 2a. 'Heelwork set up on lead' and 2b. 'Heelwork on lead'
(a) Heelwork Set up – on lead, handler to set the dog up in heelwork position, in a designated spot, facing the judge, on steward's command. Handler to be asked if they are ready, when this is acknowledged, steward will say 'end of test' **2 points**
(b) Heel on lead, from a moving start and detailed in Annex G(C)4 c and d – Tests **8 points**
 - (3) ~~Recall with a finish on lead, off lead or long line, at the handler's choice~~ 40 points

Recall, to be set and marked as 3 distinct exercises:-

(a) 'Recall Present' – On lead dog sitting in front of the handler, handler takes one step back on steward's command, then calls the dog into the present again on steward's command, the steward will say 'end of test'

2 points

(b) 'Recall Finish' – on lead. Dog sitting in front of the handler, on steward's command, handler directs the dog to heel, whilst keeping feet still, the steward will say 'end of test'

2 points

(c) 'Recall – on/off a long line – handler's choice'. On command, the handler shall leave the dog in a sit or a down in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog which must return briskly – no present is required, but will not be penalised – once the dog has returned, the steward will say 'end of test'

6 points

(4) TOTAL **30 points**
 (Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)
 (Effective 1 January 2024)

Regulation G(C)4

TO:

G(C) Descriptions and Explanatory Notes For Obedience Tests Classes

4. Tests.

- a. Judges must ensure that all manoeuvres can be satisfactorily accomplished by all breeds that may be entered in the class.
- b. In all classes the handler may use the dog's name with a command or signal without penalty.
- c. Heelwork – in all classes at the start and end of the test the dog should be sitting straight at the handler's side. **Except in Introductory, which will be from a moving start.**
- d. Heel on lead (applicable to ~~Introductory Class~~, Pre-Beginners, Beginners and Novice) – The dog should be sitting straight at the handler's side. On command the handler should walk briskly forward with the dog at heel. The dog's shoulder should be approximately level with and reasonably close to the handler's leg at all times when the handler is walking. The lead should be slack at all times. On the command to turn, the handler should turn smartly in the direction indicated and the dog should keep its position at the handler's side. Turning manoeuvres must not be coupled together. The handler and dog must be allowed several paces if required to turn again. On the command 'Halt' the handler should halt immediately, and the dog should sit straight at the handler's side. Throughout the test the handler may not touch the dog or make use of the lead without penalty. Heelwork may include large circles or arcs as part of the heelwork exercise.

(1) ~~Introductory Class. Heelwork to be on lead and will be a large circle or straight line.~~ **Heel on Lead will be broken down into distinct**

tests, as detailed above, Heelwork from a moving start, to be on lead and will be:-

- a) A large 'figure of 8' 8 points
- b) Or a large 'S' shape 8 points
- c) Or an arc or circle in one direction, break off and reward and the pattern then repeated in the opposite direction 4 points plus 4 points

f. Recall-

(1) ~~Introductory~~ **Pre-Beginner** Class to Novice: At the start of the exercise the dog should be in the sit or down position (handler's choice of position) at the handler's left side. On command, the handler shall leave the dog in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog which must return briskly to the 'present' position and sit. When instructed, the handler will command the dog to go to the heel position on the handler's left side and sit in the 'heel' position.

~~(1)~~**(2) Introductory Class – will be divided into three parts – 4.f.(1)a. Present, 4.f.(1)b. Finish and 4.f.(1)c. Recall, and will each be tested separately.**

- a) 'Present' – on lead dog sitting in front of the handler, handler takes one step back on steward's command, then calls the dog into the present on steward's command, the steward will say 'end of test' - 2 points
- b) 'Finish' – on lead dog sitting in front of the handler, on steward's command, handler directs the dog to heel and finish in a sit, whilst keeping feet still. The steward will say 'end of test' - 2 points
- c) 'Recall' On/off a long line – handler's choice. At the start of the exercise the dog should be in the sit or down position (handler's choice of position) at the handler's left side on or off a long line (handler's choice). On command, the handler shall leave the dog in the direction instructed. When instructed, the handler will halt and then turn to face the dog. When instructed, the handler will recall the dog, which must return briskly to the handler. A present is not required, but will not be penalised. The steward will say 'end of test' - 6 points

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold. Renumber subsequent regulations)

(Effective 1 January 2024)

- 8. It was noted that there was some confusion as to whether handlers were permitted to carry food in their hands in the classes where food was allowed. Regulation G(A)9.a and G(A)10.a specifically stated that food must be kept in a small closed container during the exercise and that the judge would designate an area in the ring where food could be given.

9. However, regulation G(A)9.e.(1) stated that food should be in a sealed container but could be either left on the reward table or be concealed in the handler's pocket during the tests.
10. A brief discussion occurred as to whether the intention was for handlers to be able to keep the container of food on their person during the Introductory and Pre-Beginner tests that allowed food rewards, or whether they should only be allowed in the designated area.
11. The Council agreed that handlers should be able to carry food in their pockets during the relevant exercises and it was agreed that proposed wording to clear up the regulations would be brought back to the Council's next meeting. It was agreed that guidance would be published to ensure competitors were aware that they could not carry food containers or toys in their hand during exercises where such rewards were allowed.

Kennel Club Obedience Festival

12. At its last meeting the Council received an update on the ongoing plans for the Obedience Festival. Discussions had been ongoing as to specifics of when and where the festival would take place.
13. The Council noted a report from Mrs Cox, Mrs Hyde and Mrs Smith. Mrs Cox explained that after looking at many different areas for suitability in terms of location it had been determined that Stafford County Showground was the most suitable venue. It also meant that the festival could be held in conjunction with Lichfield & District Dog Training Society's championship obedience show.
14. A discussion followed in which it was decided that it would not be possible to hold the festival in 2024 due to the tight timeframe and lack of funding available. There was also a concern about the proposed dates due to potential for competitors to have already arranged other commitments after Lichfield's show.
15. A suggestion was put forward that it would be beneficial to prepare a proposal with approximate figures and organisation structure to submit to the Activities Committee for consideration, so that the idea could be agreed in principle and forwarded to the Finance Committee.
16. The Council agreed that this would be a positive step and agreed to prepare a proposal for the Committee. It was stressed that the proposal needed to detail why obedience as a discipline would benefit from the festival and how it would be different from other obedience shows.

Eligibility for Beginners

17. At its last meeting the Council considered a proposal from Mr Moxon regarding eligibility for Beginners Class. The Council had not agreed the wording as put forward due to concerns about whether it succeeded in protecting beginner handlers. It was agreed that further work would be done on the wording by Mr Moxon and brought back to this meeting.

18. The proposal was discussed later in the meeting under Item 8.

ITEM 5. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

19. The Council had been due to receive a report from Mrs LeFevre following the Sub-Group's meeting which took place on 30 August 2023. Mrs LeFevre had not been able to produce the report in advance of the meeting and instead gave a verbal update.
20. There had not been much to update the Council on, however, there was some research into dogs queueing in agility which could have proven to be useful for obedience. However, the student undertaking the research had halted the research due to having stopped studying.

ITEM 6. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

21. The Council had been due to receive a report from Mrs K Allen following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 15 November 2023, however no report had been received and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

ITEM 7. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB

22. The Council noted a written report from Mrs Lavender which noted details of future YKC events.
23. Mrs Lavender noted that there had been limited communication with the YKC department but was hopeful that with the appointment of a new executive that communication could be improved. It was noted that the YKC department was extremely short-staffed which had unfortunately impacted the channels of communication, but it was hoped this would improve.
24. A query was raised as to whether it would be possible for children to qualify for YKC events at non-YKC obedience shows. It was suggested that this would provide more opportunities for children to qualify and not have to travel long distances to attend YKC-specific shows/qualifiers. It would also encourage more young people to compete. Mrs Lavender agreed to raise the suggestion with the department again.

ITEM 8. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Mr Moxon

Eligibility for Beginners

25. At its last meeting the Council considered a proposal from Mr Moxon regarding eligibility for Beginners Class. The Council had not agreed the wording as put forward due to concerns about whether it succeeded in protecting beginner handlers. It was agreed that further work would be done on the wording by Mr Moxon.

26. The Council considered the revised proposal submitted by Mr Moxon which was seconded by Mrs Turner. It included three stages to help with the discussion and to address the issues that had been raised previously.
27. A lengthy discussion occurred relating to whether Pre-Beginner handlers would feel disillusioned by having to compete alongside 'experienced' Beginner handlers with new dogs. It was felt that it would not be a significant issue and would help to keep people in obedience due to being able to bring new dogs out in a lower class.
28. A vote took place, and the following amendment was **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G(A)11

TO:

To compete in Beginners a ~~handler or~~ dog must not have won a total of two or more first places in Beginners class or one first place in any other Obedience class (Introductory class and Pre-Beginners excepted) and have not elected to progress on points from Beginners; **plus, the handler must not have won a first place in any other Obedience class (Introductory class, Pre-Beginners and Beginners excepted) and have not elected to progress on points from Novice.**

(Deletion struck through. Insertion in bold.)

29. The proposal also suggested a note be applied to the end of the regulation as follows:

Handlers that have progressed or won out of Beginners, prior to 31 January 2024, will continue to enter Novice as their lowest available class from January 2025.

30. However, noting that the second stage of the proposal addressed the issue of the regulation being applied retrospectively the Council went on to discuss the second stage before deciding on the above.

31. The proposed solution was as follows:

Handlers that have previously entered Novice as their lowest available class before 31 December 2024 may elect to continue to treat Novice as their lowest available class. Once they have elected to do so they will not be eligible for Beginners thereafter.

32. A query was raised whether a handler that chose to stay in Novice with their current dog would be able to put any new dog into Beginners. It was clarified that the handler would be able to bring out a new dog in Beginners class.
33. A vote took place and the above addition to Regulation G(A)11 was **recommended** for approval.

34. The third stage of the proposal dealt with a consequential amendment to the approval of judges' regulations to account for handlers who had progressed with a dog into Novice but could also compete in Beginners with a new dog.
35. A vote took place, and the following amendment was **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G32.c.(1)

TO:

On first appointment judges must satisfy the show committee that they:
(1) have ~~won~~ **progressed** out of Beginners at a licensed championship, premier or open obedience show as a handler.
(Deletion struck through. Insertion in bold.)

Mrs D Cox

Declaring merit points when entering Championship Class C

36. Mrs Cox wished the Council to discuss the proposal to make it optional to declare merit points on entries for Championship Class C if entries were less than 60. There appeared to be confusion amongst competitors as to whether it was necessary to submit merit points and that some competitors were estimating their points.
37. The Council agreed that with the reduced numbers of competitors in Championship Class C, merit points had become less relevant, but did not wish to remove the requirement to submit them entirely, in case numbers increased in the future.
38. It was not felt that Mrs Cox's suggestion, which put the onus on the competitor to know how many entries had been received in a class, was the correct way to deal with the issue. Mrs Cox clarified that her suggestion had been intended to remove an element of work from show processors.
39. A suggestion was put forward that the regulation be suspended for a period of time with the option to reinstate it should numbers require it. It was noted that there were currently no championship obedience shows that were receiving more than 60 entries into Championship Class C.
40. The Council agreed with this suggestion and following a vote, **recommended** the suspension of regulation G30.e for a period of 24 months from 1 January 2025 with the option to reinstate it should competitor numbers in Championship Class C require it.

Lisburn & District Dog Training Club

Mr M McCartney

Caller and scribe stewards competing

41. Mr McCartney, on behalf of Lisburn & District Dog Training Club wished the Council to consider a proposal which would allow caller and scribe stewards to work a dog on the same day that they were a caller/scribe. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Patrick.

42. It was agreed that there was general support amongst the regions, but that there had been queries about whether the stipulation of there being 25 dogs or less in the class was for the class that the person would be stewarding or the class they wished to enter.
43. Mr McCartney clarified that it would be for the class that the person would be stewarding. It was also clarified that if a person was stewarding more than one class, then the stipulation would be for each class and not the combined total of entries across both classes. An amendment was proposed by Mrs Smith and seconded by Mrs Hyde to ensure that this was made clear.
44. It was acknowledged that for the regulation to be properly applied it would need to be made clear that effective communication between the steward, the show management and the judge would be needed for it to work without any disruption to the running of a show.
45. The Council took a vote and by a majority the following amendment was **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G30.g

TO:

Judges should, whenever possible, provide their own caller stewards, but the show management shall provide any caller stewards if necessary. Caller and scribe stewards used by judges at the show must not work a dog on the same day, with the exception that at a show ~~with 6 scheduled classes or less,~~ a caller and scribe stewards may compete in one class, other than the class in which they are officiating, provided that the class **in which they are officiating** has ~~20~~ **25** entries or less. Caller and scribe stewards taking up this option will be exempt from any running order and may compete at a convenient time agreed by the judges concerned.

(Deletion struck through. Insertion in bold)

Ms Godfrey, Mrs Turner and Ms Shaw left the meeting.

ITEM 9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mrs K Allen

Mrs L Turner

Age of dogs at shows

46. Mrs K Allen, an individual, wished the Council to discuss the possibility and effect of changing regulation G1.c to allow dogs of 12 weeks to be entered not for competition at obedience shows. Mr Moxon presented the discussion item on behalf of Mrs Turner in her absence.
47. The Council was in agreement that this was a sensible suggestion and would help with overall socialisation of dogs in an environment in which they would be spending a lot of time. Therefore, the Council agreed that Mrs Allen be requested to submit a proposal for the next meeting.

Ms Godfrey, Mrs Turner and Ms Shaw rejoined the meeting.

Miss McHardy left the meeting.

48. Mrs Turner apologised for returning late from lunch and for also making her colleagues late.

ITEM 10. STRATEGY DOCUMENT

49. The Council reviewed the Strategic Plan, which had been updated in line with requests that the Council had made at its previous meeting. It discussed how the items may be progressed and to propose further items.
50. It was hoped that with the appointment of a new Executive for the Young Kennel Club department progress could be made on the items on the strategy document relating to the YKC.
51. It was noted that reviewing the structure of obedience classes was an ongoing consideration.
52. A discussion occurred on the topic relating to the council's engagement with grass-roots competitors. It was highlighted that there were some issues with non-Kennel Club dog training clubs that could be seen to be making it hard to advertise Kennel Club training clubs. It was noted that there was a specific dog training accreditation that was becoming popular and that The Kennel Club should be doing more to provide an accreditation that was less onerous than the current Kennel Club Accredited Instructors Scheme.
53. The office informed the Council that within the strategic review occurring within The Kennel Club the KCAI scheme was also being reviewed. It was hoped that a solution could be found once the strategic review had been completed.

Miss McHardy rejoined the meeting.

54. It was agreed that there was some work to be done on making sure facilities were available for newcomers to obedience, especially if they had progressed through the Good Citizen Dog Scheme, to ensure they continued to engage with The Kennel Club. This would be added to the strategy document as an action point to consider under the section dealing with attracting newcomers into obedience.
55. It was noted that on the subject of engagement with grassroots competitors, there had been complaints from obedience clubs who had not received communications relating to council nominations. The office clarified that this could be due to an incorrect email address or the club not having listed obedience as one of the activities it undertook.
56. The development of the Obedience Festival had been discussed earlier in the meeting and the actions from that discussion would be added to the strategy document.

57. The Council went on to discuss the strategy item relating to encouraging smaller shows. It was felt that smaller shows could become the norm in the future due to rising costs of living meaning competitors would not want to travel as far. It was questioned whether there would be ways to make the show management process easier for smaller shows, such as making the licence application process easier.
58. The office informed the Council that an email was due to be sent to all clubs informing them that licences could be applied for online via their club account. Application, invoice, payment and issuing of the licence could all occur electronically.
59. It was also noted that shows had a tendency to restrict other shows being held within a certain distance of their show, which was preventing smaller shows going ahead. However, it was also noted that there was a risk of affecting a show's income from entries if more than one show was held within a certain area on the same day. A suggestion was made that obedience shows could be held in conjunction with breed shows or other activities to help reduce costs and manage clashes. It was noted this was done quite often for rally competitions.
60. It was also noted that there was the issue of having enough judges for shows if there were clashes. It was noted it was already difficult to secure judges for shows, particularly for Class C. Judges were needed to be secured years in advance to ensure there were sufficient judges for a show.
61. It was queried whether there was a list of qualified judges available as this would make it easier to find judges. The office explained that the Find a Judge service was only for Championship judges for obedience, agility and working trials currently. However, the office queried whether a database for non-ticket judges would be desirable to the Council. A similar database was being developed for breed show judges and it was hoped additional disciplines could be added if enough support was shown.
62. The Council was in favour of this suggestion and wished its unanimous support to be minuted. It would also be added to the strategy document.

Mrs Hyde left the meeting.

ITEM 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

63. Mrs Godfrey questioned whether The Kennel Club was aware of concerns being raised in Europe that dog sports were stressful to dogs and suggestions that they should be banned. She noted that it had not been heard in the UK. The office agreed to look into the matter and make sure the relevant departments were aware.
64. Mr McCartney noted that Mr John Farr had resigned from the Council due to ill health and Mrs Helena Weaver had resigned from the Council due to a lack of

time to devote to the role. Nominations for replacements would be organised by the office in due course.

ITEM 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

65. The Council noted the next meeting of the Obedience Liaison Council would take place on 25 July 2024 via Microsoft Teams. Any items for the agenda must be submitted by 6 May 2024.

The meeting closed at 15:40

MR M MCCARTNEY
Chair

THE KENNEL CLUB'S MISSION STATEMENT

'The Kennel Club is the national body which exists to promote the general improvement, health and well-being of all dogs through responsible breeding and ownership'