



Paw Blacks New Zealand in Australia, 2016

A team of NZ agiliteers and their dogs travelled across the Tasman Sea from Auckland to Adelaide to compete in the Australian Agility Nationals South Australia, 25th – 29th May 2016, held at Wirrina Cove Holiday Park, Paradise Drive, Wirrina Cove (www.agilitynationals2016.com.au). There were months of planning and heaps of lists written prior to the actual departure day.

Flying dogs

Flying dogs overseas always seems to be a worrisome experience. It could be something to do with the fact they are not sitting on the seat beside the traveller or nearby and visible in a comfy crate as usual, or perhaps it's because of all the paperwork that is involved, the tests the dogs need to have and the "what could happen" if they react positively to any of them. First off was Louise Marsh with Trickster and Fly from Dunedin who left on Tuesday 17th May and flew into Melbourne, arriving safe and sound.

Next were Kirstin Graves with Key from Auckland, and Dyson and Paula Beasley with Switch from Rotorua who left Wednesday 18th flying into Adelaide. The (almost) worst thing a dog owner could imagine happened! The dogs Key and Switch were unloaded and left at Auckland Airport with all the other "cargo"! Really? Our national carrier did that, causing frantic phone calls and a raft of changed plans!! Luckily Louise was still in Melbourne, and arranged for the dogs to be flown there for her to pick them up that evening, and then both parties drove through the night to meet up somewhere in the middle. Three hours sleep that night, but dogs and owners were eventually reunited! Massive thanks also go to Sarah from Pet

Transport, without her support and quick thinking, things could have been a lot worse and the dogs a lot more stressed.

The final contingent left Auckland on Friday 20th - Darren Johnston with Zuki from Christchurch, Rae Evans with Brooke from Southland, Peter de Wit with Ali and Quick from Wellington, and Fiona Ferrar with Cuda from Hamilton. They were naturally nervous, but after hearing how assertive Darren was about ensuring Zuki was on the flight from Christchurch to Auckland with him, he was charged with making sure we did not take off until it was confirmed the dogs were on board. Mission accomplished – all dogs, people and bags arrived safely!

When you fly dogs overseas to Australia and back, even if they are only away for a couple of weeks, they have to get special/large crates, numerous worm and flea/tick treatments, you have to use a Pet Transport company, visit vets in both countries, and fill in a pile of forms. Surely a form of Pet Passport or some other sensible option could be employed!

Supporters

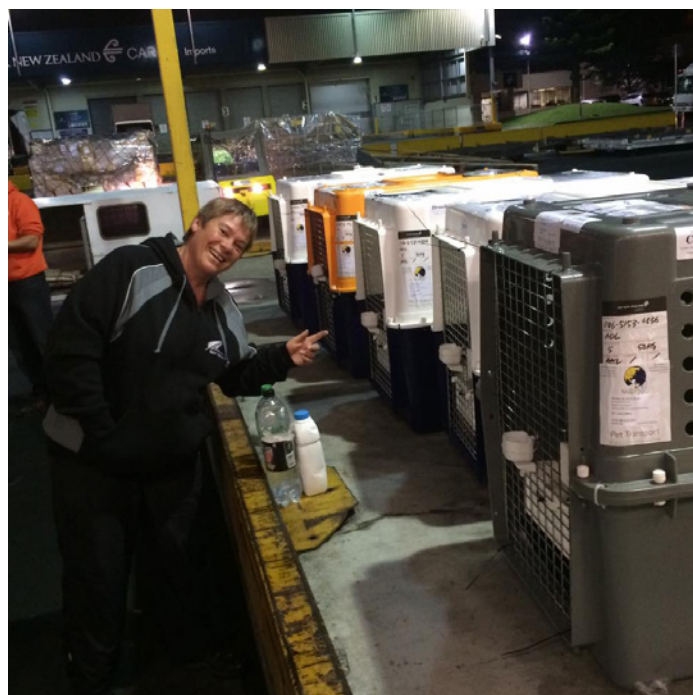
In addition to the competitors, a large number of other kiwis also made the trip. There were the kiwi judges who were also judging at the Australian event – Cam List, Libby Ellery and Lyn Sayers (Kirstin and Dyson were also judging) and the awesome supporters – Emily, Keri, Nat, Lucinda, Mischa, Sue, Michelle and Sarah S. We also had the lovely Sarah Cruickshand from VetPhysio who was our resident dog/people physio and did a marvellous job of keeping us all on our feet. Kirstin's parents, Sheryl and Colin, had travelled over from the Gold Coast and spent a lot of time ring stewarding.

Where was the event held?

The event was held Wirrina Cove Holiday Park, about 80km south of Adelaide, which included a large sports oval capable of holding eight rings as well as associated camping areas and walking tracks and close to the beach.

How do dog people get around in Adelaide?

For a small group of people, we nearly exhausted the permutations of how to get around! Peter and Fiona borrowed a car and trailer, Louise and Darren hired a van, Rae travelled with friends from Oz, while Kirstin and the Beasleys hired campervans. Another near-disaster was averted by a keen-eyed kiwi following behind them (Cam List's father), and some local Aussies when the trailer Pete and Fiona's dogs were in nearly became disconnected from its



Flying dogs between New Zealand and Australia is never without issue, but leaving dogs behind while the owners unknowingly fly off was a bad thing Air NZ!

chassis! The lovely local Aussie Truck firm welded it back together for free and possible disaster was averted. Interestingly enough they don't have a WOF system in that part of Australia like we do in New Zealand which would have picked up the problem.

Whilst some team members camped on the grounds the others rented houses nearby – living as flatmates for a couple of weeks helped create a feeling of being in a team, especially when the team members live in opposite ends of New Zealand and rarely see each other.

Team uniform

We received a lot of compliments while we were away about our team uniform and how we all supported each other. The uniform was supplied by Admor Promotions and Apparel (www.admor.co.nz) and looked fantastic. It was easy to spot when a Paw Blacks dog was running, there would always be someone in uniform standing ringside to support, cheer, and take the all-important videos! Our dogs weren't left out and they were outfitted in flash collars and leads by Woofa Wares, which also drew a lot of admiration from the Aussies.

Technology rules!

Kiwis are renowned for their love of technology and the TV crew in Oz ensured that those back home got an almost-live video coverage of the day's events. Paula Beasley and her TV crew posted runs on Facebook (PawBlacks have a Facebook page) within minutes of the runs occurring, and it was great for team members to know that there was so much support and interest from folk back in NZ. Interesting fact; most of the team all had Aussie simcards and coverage was good in most places. But at the venue, iPhones and Samsung S7s could get coverage while those with lowly S5s had to wait until the end of the day to catch up on news, and missed meeting points.

That first weekend we were blown away by the helpfulness of all the competitors, judges and people at the show. The first Paw Blacks Trip was to Adelaide in 2007 and there were a lot of people who remembered us 9 years later.

Pre-National event



There were two events (called trials over there) the weekend before the Nationals which the team all competed in. Saturday was a stunning fine day and the team sat near a borrowed marquee and calmed their nerves together eating Kirstin's cookies. That day was a GAMES Day – events on that day were Snooker, Gamblers and Strategic Pairs. Darren had never done games before, but is a total convert now after winning both Novice Gamblers events! All the dogs got qualifications with many ribbons for the Paw Blacks. Notable was Pete's run with Ali in the afternoon Gamblers when they accumulated 105 points – a huge amount seeing as Gamblers can be won on around 70 points.

Sunday was at a different venue and started off a bit windy, but by lunchtime the rain had set in and we were all pretty cold by the time we left at around 6:00pm. Quick was the star of the morning with three wins (Masters and Open Agility, Masters Jumpers) with placings in Open Agility for Key and Cuda. The team took out the unsplit Open Agility in the afternoon with Switch 1st, Tricky 2nd and Cuda 3rd. Most of us had entered all eight events on that day, but were not intending to run them all. The rain made that decision quite easy!



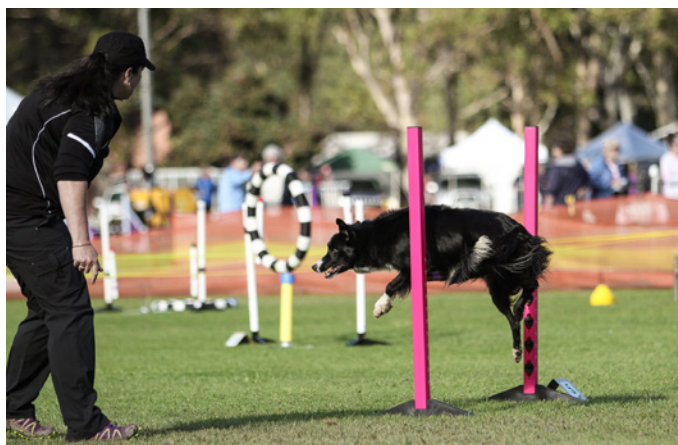
Photography by Emily Taylor & Natasha Coulter

Rest days

The Monday and Tuesday were rest days. Some shopping was done for wet weather gear and umbrellas as the weather forecast for the week was not good, and getting worse by the day. Unfortunately Darren got a recurrence of his groin injury on the first weekend, but he received some great physio and acupuncture and kept running till the last class. We also travelled south to where the national event was being held in Wirrina Cove. The parking area for cars was a fair way away, and the one for trailers was even further away (Note to teams: don't borrow a trailer again!). By the end of the weekend, most people had found somewhere a bit closer to park. We had a Paw Blacks camping area with the two camper vans, Kirstin's parent's caravan, and Lyn and Sarah Sayers' smaller van which they slept in. It was handy having kiwi judges with their own park which might have ended up having a dog van in there instead.

The Nationals Event – weather and ground report

The event was to start on Wednesday and end on Sunday (five days of agility!). The weather was pretty bad on Wednesday with fewer spectators than expected for the team event where the Paw Blacks placed 6th out of the nine teams. Thursday was a beautiful day, but Friday was not great and the whole day of agility was cancelled with the aim of preserving the grounds for the final two days. On Saturday we started at 12:00pm and ran the events that should have been held on Friday. All of the six open heats that were scheduled



to run on Saturday were cancelled, which meant that all dogs went straight into the finals which were run on Sunday. Saturday and Sunday were fine days, and the grounds held up remarkably well considering the amount of rain that had fallen. It was disappointing to have missed out a day at the time, but was a great decision and in reality having a rest day in the middle was awesome. It allowed dogs and handlers to recuperate, and many of us had the most amazing lunch a few kilometres from the venue (sussed out by Sarah Sayers on one of her long runs). The Team was invigorated!

How the team went

During the nationals there were some amazing runs to watch from both Aussies, and Kiwis. We had a large amount of success in both

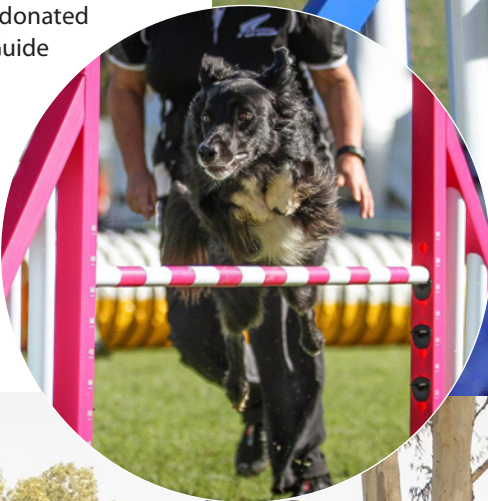




Games, Agility and Jumpers. The team donated their winnings, bags of dog food to the Guide dogs of South Australia

Peter's effort to get 1st with Ali and 3rd with Quick in the Open Jumpers final was very impressive – this was an unsplit class of 270 dogs.

Louise won the final of the Masters 600 Jumpers as well as Excellent Snooker with Trickster.





Brooke and Zuki won the Novice Strategic Pairs.

Key, Cuda and Zuki also qualified for finals as they had placings in the heats. Quick was 3rd in the Masters 500 Agility final. Zuki was 3rd in Novice Gamblers, In Masters Gamblers Ali was 2nd, Quick was 4th and Fly was 5th. Cuda was 3rd in Excellent Snooker and Cuda/Trickster 2nd Excellent Strategic Pairs.

The next event is in Melbourne in April 2018



AGILITY IN AUSTRALIA a brief description

They run Agility, Jumpers and Games just like us.

Each of these have three levels:

Novice = Grade C

Excellent = Grade B

Masters = Grade A

All of these classes are split by height regardless of number of entries.

There is also Open Agility and Open Jumpers in which all dogs can compete in but is not split.

A key feature of Open is the distance challenge in the course. The Games are Gamblers, Snooker and Strategic Pairs. They are not split.

CLASSES AT THE NATIONALS 2016

3 Agility Heats & Final

3 Jumpers Heats & Final

3 Agility Open Heats & Final

3 Jumpers Open Heats & Final

Snooker

Gamblers

Strategic Pairs

Team Event – Agility & Jumpers

For more information go to...???????????