



KiwiDogAgility

by Karen de Wit

AGILITY – why do people do it?

It's official – most people do agility because its FUN!! It is fun for them and fun for their dogs.

Fun is an emotion. Similar words are good, happy, amusing, enjoyable, entertaining, lively, boisterous, convivial, Diverting, merry and witty. Agility can be most of these.

Opposite words are: boring, disagreeable, unpleasant, bad or sad. Agility is none of these!

For some people their love of agility began when they saw TUX Wonderdogs on TV (which aired from 1993–1997 and then again 2004–2005) or came across an agility event on a field somewhere in New Zealand or overseas. For others it was a natural progression from horse eventing, requiring much less financial strain and less danger. Others cannot remember what got them into agility, but they declare they are well and truly addicted now! For many their love of agility started at a very young age.

"When I was about 15 I saw an agility display at a dog show back in Europe. No kidding, I cried with happiness watching those dogs run, they transferred their happiness onto me."

Many admit that for them Agility = Pure addiction! Others can't explain why they do it, they just need to!

As far as the **relationship with your dog** is concerned, agility enhances it. When you do agility you develop a unique bond between you and your dog. Many people have found there is no better way to earn the trust of a rescue dog. Their confidence increases and they thrive. It is great to see them succeed, even if they are not the ideal agility dog, by giving the best they are able. Agility provides a great excuse to spend time with your dog, instead of doing other things, like work, or household chores!

"I love...watching my dogs grow, learn and become addicted themselves. I love the improved relationships we now have and the confidence growth, and of course, those times when we are at one on a course. It is our special time together."

Agility provides exercise for the dog. Other people find that agility calms their dog down! It gives them something to focus their

on and makes them easier to live with. Most dogs also seem to find agility as much fun as their owners.

"I have never seen my dog light up like he does at agility, it really is his favorite thing in the world."

Many people compete with their dogs in other working codes (obedience, trials, agility) and find that agility is the one they and their dogs enjoy the most! Happy dogs and happy handler regardless of the end result equals FUN

Agility provides people with a challenge. **It's a competitive sport.** It is a challenge to train a dog well, and to compete well with them. This can create an even stronger bond between a person and their dog. When you go to a competition, you can watch other people and pick up tips from them and usually by the end of the weekend you will have more things to aim for and consequently to train. Agility is simply an adrenaline rush – a 20-40 second (hopefully) adrenalin rush as we run the course.

Clear rounds are a sought after reward as well as those silky ribbons. Many also like the fact that agility judging is more transparent than other disciplines – you either knock a rail or you don't.

Agility also provides a **social opportunity** for many people.

"It's about spending time and having laughs with good friends at shows."

It is also great to hang out with people who find it acceptable to talk about dogs all day and if you stopped you would miss seeing all your friends! For others it's an opportunity to leave the hassles of work and family behind. It is also great to be able to share your achievements with friends who understand how hard it can be.

"Most importantly I made some super friendships and met some fantastic people through being involved in the sport."

"The people are lovely and always willing to help you out when you're stuck. Agility people really are the best people ever."

Agility is good for people in other ways including **health aspects, mentally as well as physically.** Agility is great for all ages and fitness levels. You get exercise! If it were not for Agility, many people confessed they would be a couch potato! And most agree that even the most frustrating day at agility is better than doing housework





Photo by Cheyenne
Perfect from Team
Stafford



(and they buy T-shirts to prove that's the way they feel). For others agility is like therapy.

"it's my playtime. It helps take my mind off other things."

The improvement in a person's physical ability can also be amazing. People with chronic back pain find as they get involved in agility, get fitter and lose weight, their pain subsides.

"I have overcome joint pain. It's good for my body..."

Agility is also a **great way to see the country**. Agility clubs are all over New Zealand and it is easy to combine a road trip with agility competitions. Getting out in the fresh air can be exhilarating. Agility events are held in many places from central city parks to wilderness lakesides. The location itself can be intoxicating, let alone the wine that often goes with it.

"Having so much fresh air is exhausting!"

Working a dog in agility can provide a wonderful feeling for the person, especially when all the training comes together. When you see your dog doing the behaviours that you have taught them, when they are supposed to be doing them, and possibly getting success – that's fun!

"When you do a run where you and your dog work in absolute harmony it is magic – the result does not matter."

I love doing that fantastic clear round in Senior or A, and thinking we nailed it!"

There is usually one regret people have about agility and that is that they didn't get into it earlier.

At an event, the sense of excitement builds as you are waiting your turn. But you don't even have to compete to enjoy agility. Many agiliteers have friends and family members that accompany them. Watching other people/dogs run can also be fun as agility is a great spectator sport.

Many admit to suffering an affliction that befalls many an agiliteer – not enough agility!

One person admitted, *"Unfortunately we don't have agility every single day, so I also have to do working trials, tracking, rally, coursing, breed showing and join a multitude of dog clubs and committees. Help me. I think I have a problem!"*



Photo by Claire Smith

