



KiwiDogAgility

Certificate of fitness

By Karen de Wit

The Certificate of fitness (COF) programme is a way that the Agility community checks that the agility equipment used in competitions not only meets the specifications outlined in the regulations, but is also safe for the dogs to use.

Many club have already had their assessment completed, and by mid 2015 all the Agility Clubs in NZ will have had their equipment checked by a team of assessors delegated to cover their region. If there are any issues needing attention, they will need to be repaired or replaced before they can be used in the next competition. When it is all ticked off the Club will receive a COF certificate to display on its club room wall. Most Clubs take pride in their equipment, and put time and money into ensuring it is fit for purpose however, given that the last COF check-up was about 5 years ago, it is inevitable that some equipment will be looking tired, if not worn out!



The Agility Committee has budgeted some money from reserves to assist clubs with upgrading or replacing problem gear identified in the COF process by allowing them to apply for a grant.

A COF assessment team was appointed by the Agility committee, with representatives covering NZ. There were two meetings held, one in each Island, so that the assessors could discuss what sort of things they were looking for, and to create a consistent message for clubs. The assessors are:- Zone 1: Nick Chester, Steve Chester. Zone 2:- Deb Jackson, Dyson Beasley, Sue Willis. Zone 3 :- Karen de Wit, Aprille McGee. Zone 4:- Lisa Duff, Graeme Lawson. Zone 5:- Dave Cook, Wayne Grant.

The sort of things noticed during a COF assessment include:-

1. Worn or balding rubber on contact surfaces, and excess glue when making repairs. A good rubber chip surface is essential for ensuring the equipment is nonslip.



2. Screws or nails that work their way loose over time. These provide a hazard for dogs as they traverse the equipment.
3. Hoops that are out of shape, and tape that is loose. The hoops are supposed to be round and have contrasting banding stripes to help the dog to see the obstacle. Some hoop stands have an excess number of holes which is very confusing for people altering heights, and these need to be well marked.
4. Tunnels that have become worn. Tunnels with holes in them are an obvious hazard with dogs easily catching their nails in them and getting strained toes or worse. Some tunnels develop threads throughout their length that need to be trimmed. The methods of fixing tunnels also need to be checked as regards their padding, because if a dog bangs into the tunnel entry/exit by mistake it needs to be as soft as possible.





Recently all Clubs updated their jumps so jumps are now wider and safer than ever before. Metal lugs have been replaced with soft flexible rubber on many jumps. The introduction of free-standing wings has also created safer jumps for dogs as these fall away when the dog hits them.

The aim is to complete the COF process by the middle of 2015. Of course it is still up to Clubs to ensure their equipment remains safe to use between COFs, and there will always been ongoing maintenance issues with equipment that may be used multiple times during the week by many dogs of all shapes and sizes..

5. Weave poles need to be a certain height and the base needs to be constructed so the metal supports will not be in the path of the dog, and they create a straight line weave.
6. Slats commonly become loose on contact equipment and these need to be firmly secured.
7. Some seesaws have incorrect drop-rates. This must fall between 1-3 seconds.
8. Long jump units need to be the correct height. Some have been found to be a bit wobbly, needing extra screws, tightening or other repair done.
9. Pegs. Clubs must also make sure that the pegs they use are safe and do not stick out in the dogs path.

