

KiwiDogAgility

By Helen Lappin

Kids Novelty Agility Event May 2013

The 'Kids novelty agility event' was a bit of a despaired mother's brainwave, after months of watching Zack (7) and then more recently (when she had to fill in and run for her big brother), Niamh (3), run dogs at our local shows, and watching them struggle with standard courses. This coupled with training several kids in the kids agility group at Canterbury Canine Agility Training Society (CCATS) who should be out there competing, but to quote them "I can't run with all those adults, I'm too scared/not good enough", and hearing other people training our local kids saying much the same. What's one to do I guess, but come up with a cunning plan to give all these kids a great agility day out, and raise their confidence.

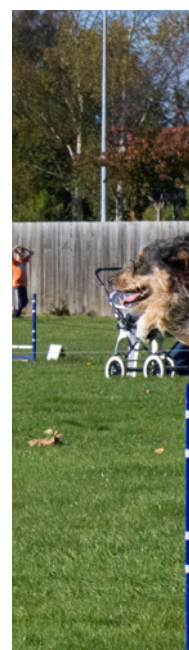
I remember sharing my thoughts and mentioning my idea of a kids agility event once local competitions quietened down in May to a few people at the Waimak DTC (WDTC) show in March, and next thing I knew I had offers of some fantastic proper judges (Irene Lock and Teresa Ford – and what an outstanding job you both did) along with offers of some amazing sponsorship from all the four local clubs plus a number of local private businesses, but most importantly we had a load of very excited agility kids, wanting to know where and when! At that point, there really was no going back, the date was set and advertising went out.

So on the 12th May 2013, many local mother's woke to breakfast in bed, supplied by some very excited kids (I am sure that was a very interesting mix), that were dying to head out the door and get to their agility day out. The weather gods were wonderful, and a nice warm autumn day was provided for the event – perfect weather for all the family to come along and have a picnic lunch and make the most of the CCATS catering.

Despite being the driving force for this and organising this event, I surely underestimated the turn out we would get! Kids turned up to compete from all over Christchurch and even as far away as Timaru. They ranged in ages from 2 years through to 15 years old, some with their very own agility dogs, some who ran others dogs that were kindly offered for the "give it a go" kids. To give you a rough idea, it took nearly an hour to get all the entries sorted. What an amazing way to spend the day and promote the sport of agility locally, best Mother's day ever!

Our two amazing judges both created two elementary courses each, plus a sample of standard classes, along with Irene's awesomely constructed mixed ability agility pairs relay. On top of this an interclub team competition and the most prestigious "Judges choice awards" were also on offer, along with the most amazing clear round certificates designed and gifted as only an agility father could (thanks Steve Tansey), topped off with an amazing array of the brightest rainbow of ribbons from Quality Presentations.

The photos, taken by the extremely generous and talented Kelly Elson from A Dozen Dogs Limited, that have been kindly donated and attached to this article, will describe more than I can what was to unfold ... the kids had an amazing day, as did the families that gathered to watch – including many very proud grandparents J. It was great to see this huge range of kids out having such a ball with their four legged friends. What was also amazing looking at the photos afterwards, was how well those kids, particularly with agility parents, must watch what happens, and mimicked our behaviour and great handling techniques were being used from even the very young. Hands/fingers were pointing out strongly, indicating where the dogs needed to go, and more than one child stopped with





hands on their hip and called a “naughty” not listening dog back to complete the course properly. I personally, had to laugh as I heard Niamh on one occasion holler “BAZIL, here, NOW” ... “our” dog was probably thinking, here we go again and rolling it’s eyes.

The end of the day saw most kids receive either a gorgeous clear round certificate and/or a ribbon and prize from one of our very generous sponsors (Thanks goes out to Back on Track, Dynamic Eyewear, A Dozen Dogs Ltd, The Kite Shop, Loreal, along with the four Christchurch clubs - Waimak DTC – Canterbury CATS – Selwyn DTC – Canterbury Canine Obedience Club who ensured there was more than enough chocolate to go around). The resounding comment at the end of the day, was, “I can’t wait until the next Kids agility event”, to which this very tired organiser could not even fathom at that point.

The promotion material I think summed up best what this day managed to achieve ...

to give our local agility kids, and any other kids that want to give the sport a go, a chance to compete and have some fun, without all the pressure of competing against adults within the sport of agility. promote the sport of agility within Christchurch/our community, and create a day of fun for our local kids

All of these things were achieved with great success, in fact Niamh at age 4 is now happily competing in monthly YKC Link with mad Baz, and can’t quite see any good reason why she can’t be running



him in his standard intermediate, senior and Jumpers A classes, despite not being able to count beyond 14 accurately. Many of schools have been graced with the ribbons and certificates at show and tell, many kids left telling their parents how they now need their very own agility dog (applies to both active agility families and non-agility families alike) and I know from my local kids agility class many are now keen to enter the local ribbon trials coming up within Christchurch for the very first time. So this is success for promotion of agility in Christchurch, success for the growth of the sport with kids who will provide a future for our sport, and success for the local clubs in a small amount of cash to get this thing going = entries for years to come. I look forward to the next “kids novelty agility event” in our area, and I would suggest kids in other areas of New Zealand would love this just as much So which area will rise to the challenge next?

Photos by Kelly Elson from A Dozen Dogs Limited

