

# OBEDIENCE, RALLY O, AGILITY AND FLYBALL

The following gives a brief overview of Obedience Trials, Agility and Fly ball. More information is available from the various rulebooks which are available at our Club.

## OBEDIENCE TRIALS

*Dog trainer Karin Larsen Bridge delves into the competitive world of obedience dog trials.*

While most dog owners are happy with a pet that will come when called, sit when asked and go for a walk without pulling their arms off, obedience competitors strive for nothing short of perfection from their canine partners.

Developed after the Second World War, competitive obedience trials were devised to “demonstrate the usefulness of the dog as the companion and guardian of man”. Dog-training clubs were a natural progression, dedicated to helping owners and their dogs achieve the standard of training required for competition.

The original aim of dog-training clubs therefore was not so much to help pet owners with the basics of training, as it was to promote dog training as a new and growing competitive sport. The curriculum of dog clubs was, and in many cases still is, based on the exercises required to pass the obedience tests prescribed by the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC), rather than specifically for the needs of average pet owners. Many would argue, however, that the foundations for a well-behaved dog are the same, regardless of whether your ambitions are for a pet you can be proud of or an obedience champion.

### Pet dog vs obedience dog

It's true that both pet owners and competitors want a dog that will come, sit, drop and walk nicely on a lead, but an obedience dog has to perform these behaviours to a much higher level. For example, in all levels of obedience competitions:

- The dog must perform all behaviours on *one* command only — no second chances.
- The dog must hold the position until commanded to move.
- The dog must sit, stand or down *straight* by your side.
- The dog must heel by your left side on or off the lead at slow, medium and fast pace. Points are lost for being too far in front or behind, too wide or crowding in too close.
- The handler may use single word commands only. For example, 'fetch' instead of 'go get it'.
- The handler may not praise the dog while it is working.
- The handler may not change body position or facial expression except to signal a command, as the judge could consider any extra movement a secondary signal.
- The handler cannot take any rewards into the ring, such as food or toys.
- The handler may not jerk or manipulate the dog physically in any way while in the ring.

The high standard of performance required, the strict regulations and the pressure of being scrutinised individually by a judge for up to 10 minutes means obedience trialling is not a sport for every pet owner. For some, however, it is these very challenges that make it so appealing.

Obedience trialling is an international sport enjoyed in countries such as the USA, UK, Europe and Japan. The five levels of tests offered by the ANKC are not only standard nationally but are substantially the same as those contested around the world. The tests are:

### **Community Companion Dog (C.C.D.)**

This is the basic level of competition and is not a compulsory section. The exercises are:

- Heel on Lead
- Stand for examination on lead
- Recall
- 1 min Sit Stay
- 2 min Down Stay

Three passes of a minimum 85 points out of a possible 100 points under at least two different judges will qualify the dog for the award Community Companion Dog, which follows after the dog's name and is normally abbreviated to C.C.D.

### **Novice (C.D.)**

Obedience trialling at the Novice level consists of the performance of a number of exercises in a formal ring situation. These exercises are:

- Heel Free
- Stand Free for Examination
- Recall Retrieve on the Flat or Change of Position
- 1 minute Sit Stay
- 3 minute Down Stay

Three passes of a minimum of 170 points out of a possible 200 under at least two different judges will qualify the dog for the award Companion Dog, which follows after the dog's name and is normally abbreviated to C.D.

### **Open (C.D.X.)**

Obedience trialling at the Open level is of a higher standard than Novice, and introduces jumping, and stays in which the handler is out of sight. The formal exercises are:

- Heel Free
- Stand Free for Examination
- Drop on Recall
- Retrieve Dumbbell on Flat
- Retrieve Dumbbell Over High Jump

- Broad Jump or Distance Control
- 3 minute Sit Stay - Handler Out of Sight
- 5 minute Down Stay - Handler Out of Sight

Three passes of a minimum of 170 points out of a possible 200 under at least two different judges will qualify the dog for the award Companion Dog Excellent, which follows after the dog's name and is normally abbreviated to C.D.X.

### **Utility (U.D.)**

Obedience trialling at the Utility level is of the highest standard in Obedience trialling. It introduces scent work, and demands a high level of training and understanding between dog and handler. The formal exercises are:

- Seek Back Lost Article
- Directed Jumping
- Scent Discrimination
- Signal Exercise
- Choice of one of
- Speak on Command
- Food Refusal
- Directed Retrieve
- Group Examination
- 10 minute Down Stay - Handler Out of Sight
- 7 minute Down Stay - Handler Out of Sight

Three passes of a minimum of 170 points out of a possible 200 under at least two different judges will qualify the dog for the award Utility Dog, which follows after the dog's name and is normally abbreviated to U.D.

### **Utility Dog Excellent (U.D.X.)**

The exercises at this level extend on those in the Utility section. The exercises are:

- Seek Back with Decoy
- Positions in Motion
- Scent Discrimination – Judges Scent
- Directed Sendaway and Recall
- Distance Control
- Multiple Retrieve
- Temperament Test

Three passes of a minimum of 170 points out of a possible 200 under at least two different judges will qualify the dog for the award Utility Dog Excellent, which follows after the dog's name and is normally abbreviated to U.D.X

### Getting started

Competitive obedience is a well-organised activity throughout Australia, New Zealand and around the world. Join any dog-training club and chances are they will automatically begin teaching you the basic requirements for obedience trialling. Dog-training clubs use volunteer instructors, so costs are kept to a minimum, making this as inexpensive a sport as you will find in today's world.

The amount of equipment required is also minimal. A good, non-slip pair of shoes, a dog, a collar and a lead are all you really need to get started. A few inexpensive retrieve articles are required in the CDX and Utility classes, but any other equipment is generally provided by the clubs.

Competitions are conducted under the auspices of the ANKC and their affiliated state bodies. You must be a financial member of your state canine council and your dog must also be registered with them. Purebred dogs and neutered crossbreeds are eligible.

### Top dog

Gaining any obedience title, from Community Companion Dog to Obedience Champion, is a great achievement and reflects a significant amount of time and effort devoted to developing a deep and trusting relationship with your dog. Top competitors find the exacting rules and criteria only add to the satisfaction of a well-executed test. They are always striving for that rare but possible perfect score — a living testament to a perfect understanding between handler and dog.

## **RALLY O**

What is Rally Obedience? Rally obedience (also known as Rally or Rally-O) is a dog sport based on obedience. Novice Rally O is on lead, with Advanced and Excellent off lead.

In Rally-O (the "O" is for obedience), the handler and dog work their way around a pre-determined course demonstrating different obedience manoeuvres such as sit, down, stay and come. Which skills you perform on the day depends on the course the judge has designed for that day.

If you are interested in traditional obedience, Rally O will help you sharpen up the skills you need and give you valuable experience in the ring as you prepare for the traditional obedience competitions.

### **How Does Rally-O Work?**

The chief objective of Rally is to provide a fast-moving and motivational sport for both Handler and dog that demonstrates a Handler and dog's competency in basic Obedience exercises without requiring exact precision for success.

Unlike regular obedience, instead of waiting for the judge's orders, the competitors proceed around a course of designated stations with the dog in heel position. The course consists of 10 to 20 signs that instruct the team what to do. Unlike traditional obedience, the judge will look for appropriate

support from handlers (so you can talk to your dog as much as you like and praise them for a job well done), happy dogs and positive teamwork.

All participants in the Rally Classes are required to perform the same exercises in substantially the same way so that the quality of the various performances may be compared and scored.

### **Trialling in Rally-O**

There are three levels of competition in Rally-O, with specified skill sets for each. At the Novice level a course will consist of 10-15 stations, with up to 31 signs available to the judge to design the course. Each competitor gets to walk the course before they compete so they can work out the order and practice your footwork. Each station is numbered (so you can see the required sequence).

More Information

The nationally approved rules that govern the conduct of Rally O trials in Australia can be found at <http://www.ankc.org.au/Rules.aspx>.

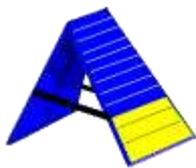
## **AGILITY, THE ULTIMATE OF DOG SPORTS**

A team sport where you are in charge of the strategy and your dog is responsible for the athleticism. Dog's leap over hurdles, power through tunnels, zip through a slalom of upright poles and scale ramps of different sizes. The aim is to find the balance between the control of the dog and the speed of the performance. Scoring is based on faults, similar to equestrian show jumping. A dog that completes the obstacles correctly within the set time will earn a Clear Round. Dogs earn titles when they achieve a set number of clear rounds.

### **Agility Obstacles**

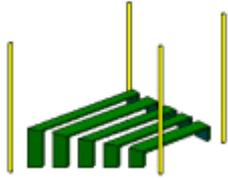
These can be a variety of Hurdles, Tunnels, Tyre jumps, Contact area equipment (Dogwalk, A-Frame and Seesaw) and Weave Poles. All designed with safety and spectator appeal in mind. The Rules and Regulations for Agility contain descriptions and measurements of obstacles and cover how performance is marked in a competition.

### **Equipment**



A-Frame

The A-Frame consists of two wide ramps. When upright the A-Frame looks like the letter 'A'. The part of the ramp nearest the ground (when upright) is painted in a contrasting colour to the top part. This indicates the part of the ramp that dogs need to make contact with.



The Long Jump consists of two to five low planks, spaced slightly apart and raised off the ground a little. This jump has marker poles at each corner. The planks have a slight horizontal slope and each graduates in height and width. The narrowest plank is the lowest to the ground.



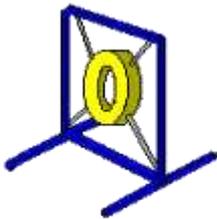
Hurdle

There are a variety of hurdles (jumps) utilised for agility competitions and include single, spread, winged and solid. Hurdles consist of two uprights that hold a bar, bars or solid element. Dogs jump between the uprights and over whatever is between. The height of the jump depends on the height class of an event.



See-saw

The See-Saw is similar to a child's see-saw in that it consists of one long plank fixed to a sturdy base it can pivot on. Each end of the plank is painted in a contrasting colour to the rest of the plank to show where dogs need to touch. Dogs run up the plank, tip it, and then run down. The see-saw is known as a 'Teeter' or 'Teeter-Totter'



Tyre

The tyre obstacle consists of a circle made of ag pipe tubing (or an actual tyre) with an aperture diameter of 450 - 600mm. This is suspended in a sturdy frame and dogs jump through the hole in the tyre. The height the tyre is suspended at depends on the height class of an event.



Pipe Tunnel

The Pipe Tunnel is a long flexible tube that dogs run through. The diameter of the tunnel is 600-800mm and the length when straight is around 3-5m. This tunnel is often flexed into different shapes, from straight, to a complete 'U' shape, to an 'S' bend.



Dog Walk

The dog walk consists of three equal length planks. These join together to form an up ramp, a cross ramp and a down ramp. Like the A-Frame, the area on the up and down ramps closest to the ground is painted in a contrasting colour. This indicates the part of the plank that dogs need to make contact with



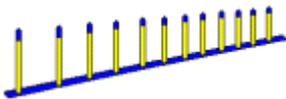
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Also known as cloth or closed tunnel. This consists of an entrance of rigid construction that resembles a short tunnel, and an exit of a tube of non-rigid material (cloth). Dogs run into the open part of the tunnel and then push their way through the cloth to exit.



Table

The pause table has a square top and the height from the ground is set depending on the height class of an event. Dogs jump onto the table and pause there for 5 seconds (the judge counts the seconds). The table has to be of sturdy construction and the top requires a non-slip surface.



Weave Poles

Weave poles consist of a set of upright poles spaced at 550mm between centres. Most events utilise a set of 12 poles but some games can use a different number. Dogs slalom in and out of the gaps between the poles.

## FLYBALL



Fly ball is a relay race between two teams of dogs (four dogs in each team). The dogs go through start gates - which are usually drag racing lights - and jump over four hurdles to a spring loaded box hold a tennis ball, grab the tennis ball and return over the four hurdles and through the finish line. If a team is really good the two dogs will meet nose-to-nose at the start line to minimise the time taken to complete the course and come out with a

really fast time. Fly ball is trained Australia-wide and many competitions are held during the year. The Club is a member of the Australian Fly ball Association.