

# Getting your dog ready to be measured for agility

Your dog will need to be measured for agility before it starts to compete at 18 months old, and again at 2 years old, for its final measure.

The measure is important as it will dictate how high your dog will have to jump.

Some dogs may obviously be maxis or micros, but others may be border-line and it is important that your dog is measured correctly so that it doesn't jump too high or too low.

sniff the stick, and reward. Then, holding the stick in front of him, position him correctly and treat. Move the stick slowly down one side, across his back and down the other side, reward. Move the stick again and stop it, reward. Add a little bit of pressure and reward him for staying put. Once your dog is comfortable then ask others to measure him. Organise a practice measure at club where many dogs may get "pretend" measures by strangers.

## *The finer points of measuring.*

Ensure your dog has done some exercise prior to being measured. A dog that has just gotten out of the car is often very excited, stand on the tips of his toes and very unlikely to stand still. Play with the ball a bit or let him work off that full head of steam before bringing him in to be measured. This may mean that you need to be at the venue well ahead of time, so plan your time accordingly.

The measurers should have organised a measuring location that is away from the hustle and bustle of the event. There may however be others lined up nearby getting ready to be measured. If you have a male dog ensure that he is not overly attracted by attractive girl dogs nearby. If he is feeling sexy he will stand on his tippy toes to impress the girls and the measure will be taller. Ask the owners of the girls to move off a little and refocus him. If your dog is shy try to ensure he is not crowded by other dogs and any more people than required. Just ask them nicely to move a way a little. It may help if the measurer gives your dog some treats, tickles him in his favourite spot, or plays tug with him before the

measure - anything that might help relax your dog.

If your dog is overweight, a fat pad might sit just above and around the scapulas and this will mean that your dog could measure taller than if he was skinny and the fat pad was not there.

If your dog is unwilling to stand do not prop him up. By lifting him up from the chest between the front legs, or by lifting him up by the head and neck, you will raise his whole front end and thus raise the measure. A gentle touch of the chin may be all that is required, and some encouraging words.

## *How can clubs help?*

- Ensure handlers know the regulations regarding dogs that are 18 months old and two years old.
- Ensure foundation training includes
  - Handling by strangers
  - Standing and Stay stands on ground and raised surfaces such as table.
  - Correct position and Foot placement by handlers
- Organise practice measuring sessions for young dogs
- Organise measure clinics at clubs or at events

Clubs could contract measurers and schedule a measuring clinic before the event begins.

*by Karen de Wit BVSc*

*Article inspired by "Measuring: what's the big deal?" Allison Bryant ~ Clean Run April 2007*

## So your dog needs to be measured for agility...what should you do?

### *How dogs are measured.*

A measuring stick is placed over the dog's withers (that point of the dog's back over the top of the shoulder blades, which is the highest point of the front leg). The withers are stationary even when the dog's neck moves up and down. If the measure is taken from the neck in front of the wither the measure could be tall and if taken from the back below the wither the measure could be short. Two measurers will measure your dog. They will each take 3-6 measures and then will record your dog's height, give you a certificate and send the details to the NZAC database.

### *How should the dog stand?*

The dog should be placed square/rectangle ie. If a line was drawn on the ground between the four feet it would look like a square or rectangle. The forelegs should be directly under the dog, straight and perpendicular to the ground. The hindlegs are placed under the hindquarters, and the hocks should be straight and perpendicular to the ground. The head is about level with the line of the back. You can hold your dog's head but don't force your dog to stand up, he must support his own weight evenly.

### *What does your dog need to do?*

If your dog is comfortable with the measuring process the measure will be more accurate. Your dog needs to:-

- stand still for a reasonable period of time, up to a few minutes.
- maintain the correct stance with all four legs square.
- be comfortable with strangers touching him
- be comfortable with a stick being placed nearby and touching him

If your dog is not comfortable during the measuring process, it will be more difficult for the measurers to get an accurate measure. Your dog might lean away or fiddle with his feet, go tense and stand tall, cringe and measure short. This will result in a protracted and difficult measuring session. A relaxed dog will measure accurately and the measuring session will be short and easy.

### *As an owner it is helpful if you:-*

- Teach your dog that strangers are Ok (hand rgeting may help)
- Have a variety of people touch your dog from the time it is a puppy
- Ensure handling is fun, providing lots of food rewards
- Practice standing your puppy from an early age and rewarding him for keeping still
- Ensure the introduction of a stick etc is not scarey but something that precedes a food reward. Take lots of yummy food and use it dur-

ing the measure process.

A relaxed dog will only need a few measures, as the measurer will get similar/exact measures whereas a stressed, poorly trained dog will require more measures. This will take longer, the measures may vary greatly and the measurer will find it difficult to work out what is your dog's true height. If the measurer has made six attempts and is still not satisfied, they should advise you to take your dog away and bring it back when it is more relaxed and able to stand.

### *Teaching a stand.*

If the dog is sitting show him a treat and move it away from his nose parallel to the ground. The dog should follow the food and stand up. Click and give him a reward. After some practice the simple act of moving your hand will encourage him to stand. Once he will stand when asked, teach him to allow you to place his feet correctly. Take the foot, pick it up, gently place it and say "stand stay". If the dog doesn't move the foot then click and treat. Practice this for all 4 feet. Once he will stand you can teach him to stand in different places – on the deck, on a table etc.

Once he can stand nicely then ask him to rest his head in your hand. Ideally the head should be about the same level as the back, so that should guide you as to where to hold your hand. Using a clicker this will be easy to teach (it is a hand targeting exercise)

The next step is to add a measuring stick or something similar (a ruler selotaped at right angles on to a stick for example). Let the dog