



THE HAPPY HEELER

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NEW POST ON AKC OBEDIENCE & RALLY JUDGES

Fix n' Go – Pilot Concept

by AKC Companion Events Department

This is a new concept, and new things can create anxiety. After all, just like our dogs, we're all creatures of routine who take comfort in the familiar. To alleviate any anxiety you might be feeling with respect to this new change, here are some things to remember.

The new Fix 'n Go concept will be offered on a one-year pilot basis beginning April 1, 2021. The concept will be evaluated throughout, and a survey will be conducted prior to the end of its term.

The Fix n' Go concept is intended to allow the handler to re-attempt the exercise to help their dog while performing in the obedience ring. Historically, any attempt to help the dog was considered 'training in the ring' and has not been permitted. Such training was penalized; however, these penalties sometimes have been inconsistently applied by judges and misunderstood by handlers. Our goal is to bring clarity to what a handler may and may not do, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, to help their dog be successful at future events.

Please remember that we are all guided by the principles of good sportsmanship. We ask our judges to be kind and patient, and our exhibitors to be thoughtful and respectful, while we work together to implement this new procedure.

CHAPTER 2 - The current Section 27 is replaced in its entirety with the following new section. The new section does not negate any other sections of the Obedience Regulations. The Obedience Judge's Guidelines remind us that the book cannot cover all situations, nor can it be a substitute for common sense.

Section 27. Training and Handling in the Ring. When a handler is using excessive verbal commands, this could indicate the dog is not under control and is not working with the handler willingly. The judge must determine if this dog should be released for a lack of control. The handler is not allowed to correct or discipline a dog and will be released from the ring.

When the dog's performance does not meet the handler's expectation, the handler may choose to use a "Fix n' Go" option once, which allows the exhibitor to immediately reattempt a single individual exercise. This allows the team to re-attempt that one exercise, and then leave the ring. In a two-part exercise, the handler may choose only one part to re-attempt. It is the handler's responsibility to tell the judge they are choosing to "Fix n' Go." Using the Fix n' Go option will result in a non-qualifying score (NQ). The handler may begin the re-attempt from the start or at any point during the exercise. The judge will call the orders for the re-attempted exercise as normal. If a jump needs to be reset, it will be set to the original height.

The handler may choose to help the dog through the Fix n' Go exercise. Helping the dog may be accomplished using verbal encouragement, including additional commands and praise, and/or approaching the dog in a friendly/positive manner without touching the dog.

Harsh verbal and/or physical corrections will not be tolerated. If there is any determination of harshness by the judge, the handler will be immediately released from the ring.

Spectators form their opinion of the sport through seeing the action of the handler and the dog. Care must be taken to avoid any action that might reflect poorly on the sport.

Let's break this new section down point by point starting with when the Fix n' Go is not used.

When a dog is not under control and willingly working with its handler, the judge must determine if the team should be released from the ring. In the process of doing so, judges are reminded to be kind (and handlers are reminded to be respectful of the judge's decision and kind to their dogs). There is no option for a Fix n' Go here.

If the handler corrects or disciplines the dog, judges must release the team. There is no option for a Fix n' Go here.

In both cases above, if the team has NQ'd an exercise the judge would write an NQ-R in the exercise box. If an NQ did not occur but the judge releases the team, the judge would write Released. In both cases, an NQ is written in the Total Score box.

An additional command should be evaluated and scored according to the Obedience Regulations, Chapter 2, Section 21 and does not, in and of itself, require the team to be released or to Fix n' Go.

If the behavior of the dog or handler requires judges to release or excuse the team, the Fix n' Go is not an option.

Examination exercises: Deductions will be made for shyness. Any display of fear or nervousness must be penalized. Judges, please do not entertain the notion of re-approaching a shy dog. The Fix n' Go is never an option in these cases.

The Fix n' Go option may be used during an individual exercise; it is not allowed in the Novice Group Exercise.

Using the Fix n' Go Option

The handler must begin an exercise to choose to use the Fix n' Go option.

The team does not have to NQ an exercise for the handler to choose to use the Fix n' Go option.

If the option is going to be used, the handler must do so before moving onto the next exercise.

It is the handler's responsibility to tell the judge they are choosing to Fix n' Go.

Once the handler tells the judge they are going to Fix n' Go, the exercise being re-attempted is marked as an NQ and the NQ is carried down to the Total Score box.

Only one part of a two-part exercise may be re-attempted. Two-part exercises are Heel on Leash and Figure Eight, Heel Free and Figure Eight, Scent Discrimination, and Directed Jumping.

If a jump needs to be reset, it will be set to the original height.

The handler may begin the re-attempt from the start or at any point during the exercise.

The judge will call the orders, and act as if judging for the re-attempted exercise as usual.

The handler may help the dog using verbal encouragement, including additional commands and praise, and/or approaching the dog in a friendly/positive manner.

The handler may not touch the dog; judges should simply release at that point if they do.

Once the re-attempt is done, the team leaves the ring.

Judges, please refrain from going into instructor mode. Leave the training up to the handler; you be the judge.

Exhibitors, please be mindful of your own and your dog's behavior in the ring. In the process of helping your dog, your actions should not be disruptive to adjacent rings. Additionally, you will need to be prepared; you will need to be ready a couple of dogs before your turn just in case teams before you are choosing to use the Fix n' Go option.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us, please be sure to send an email to obedience@akc.org.

Thank you for supporting the sport!

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR OUTDOORS (AND INDOORS!) PARASITE-FREE

Parasites may be the last thing on your mind when you and your pet are relaxing in your own backyard, but unfortunately, these persistent pests make it their business to find pets no matter where they are—even on your seemingly safe home turf.

Although there is no way to guarantee that fleas, ticks and heartworm-carrying mosquitoes won't invade your outdoor space, a few smart landscaping changes can make it much less likely for these bugs to crawl, jump and fly their way into your yard:

- Let in the sun. Get rid of the humid, shady hangout spots that fleas and ticks favor by keeping bushes well trimmed, mowing frequently and removing leaf litter.
- Avoid overwatering, which creates extra moisture and humidity that bugs thrive in.
- Create a landscaping barrier with a three-foot-wide rim of wood chips or gravel around the perimeter of your lawn so that parasites have a harder time migrating through this buffer zone into your yard.
- Clear tall grasses and brush around your home, patio and decks so that ticks will be less likely found where you and your pet spend most of your time.
- Discourage wildlife that may harbor ticks and fleas with measures such as stacking woodpiles neatly in a dry area, placing bird feeders away from the house and choosing deer-resistant plants.
- Remove any sources of standing water, no matter how small, such as empty flower pots, plastic bags, tires or any other items that may collect tiny pools of water, as these make perfect mosquito breeding grounds.
- Call a professional pest control company if you know you already have an infestation and would like to treat the area with pesticides.

Even though you can't control whether parasites or the wildlife that carry them enter your yard, you can easily stop these bugs from ever gaining a foothold in your home with year-round parasite preventives for your pets. No matter what parasites may be waiting in your pet's favorite grassy spot, preventives ensure that your pet will always stay free from fleas, ticks and heartworms.

Although bees tend to get all the attention, any insect can cause a reaction in pets, especially if your pet already has underlying allergies. Typical reactions include local redness, swelling or even pain at the bite or sting site.

If your pet experiences more serious reactions, such difficulty breathing, collapse, swelling of the face, hives or generalized itchiness or redness of the whole body, they should see their veterinarian right away, who can prescribe medications to stop the reaction and alleviate any pain.

PET-SAFE LANDSCAPING AND GARDENING

Got plans for your backyard? Your dog does too! And they involve running through, rolling in and even snacking on whatever you put back there. So before you head to the local home improvement store to start purchasing supplies for your outdoor oasis, be sure that your plans and purchases are pet-safe by keeping these factors in mind:

- Prevent cut paws by nixing any metal lawn edging in your yard. Opt for a non-sharp alternative, such as plastic edging, bricks or poured concrete.
- Fence off your veggie garden to prevent snacking on toxic plants, like garlic, onions, chives, green tomatoes, raw potatoes and rhubarb leaves. Besides, it will stop your dog from digging up and eating that irresistibly stinky fertilizer-treated soil.
- Research all the plants in your yard that your dog can chomp on to make sure they're pet-safe by checking the ASPCA toxic plant list. Grapevine is a common problem since dogs often like to graze on its prolific and toxic fruits.
- Help your pet cool off with some strategically placed shade. If your yard is mostly cement, stone or artificial turf, make sure it doesn't get too hot for sensitive paws on sunny days.
- Avoid cocoa bean mulch, which may smell nice and chocolatey but, when eaten, can cause the same issues for dogs as actual chocolate.
- Secure your compost bin to prevent curious noses from exploring or eating the partially decomposed, moldy food stewing in there.
- Avoid gopher, mole, slug and snail bait, all of which are extremely toxic and even fatal to dogs.
- Practice herbicide and pesticide safety by following package instructions for pet safety and keeping all chemicals well out of paw and nose reach.

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FIVE SURPRISING THINGS THAT ARE TOXIC TO YOUR PET

You probably know the common products that are toxic to pets, like chocolate, rat poison, antifreeze, fertilizer, batteries and more. While none of these toxins are likely to raise any eyebrows, we know some toxins that might. Check out these bizarre and unusual pet poisons.

Fuzzy green caterpillars. You read that right. Those cute, little caterpillars are not as innocent as they seem. Their adorable fuzziness actually hides some poison-secreting spines that can cause pain, itchiness and swelling, which can be especially dramatic when the spines end up in a curious pet's mouth.

Toads (cane toads and Colorado River toads). You definitely don't want to kiss these toads! Even a slight mouthing of these toads causes a poison to discharge from the glands behind their eyes, which can lead to severe drooling, followed by irregular heart rate, tremors, seizures and even death.

Pennies minted after 1982. Lucky penny? Not so much. Since 1982, pennies are minted with a zinc core, which readily dissolves and gets absorbed in the stomach. All that zinc in the bloodstream then goes on to destroy red blood cells and damage the liver, kidneys and heart.

Buckeye. Ohio State Buckeyes fans may be dismayed to find out that the leaves, seeds and growing sprouts of the buckeye (also known as the horse chestnut) tree are toxic. Low doses cause severe vomiting and diarrhea, but high doses can lead to in coordination, muscle twitching and seizures. But don't worry, the yummy, roasted chestnuts you eat around the holidays come from a totally different tree.

Lawn mushrooms. Although the vast majority of mushrooms growing in your backyard or local park are safe, a small percentage are highly toxic, and it takes a mycologist (mushroom expert) to tell the difference. So a good rule of thumb is to treat all mushroom ingestion as if they were deadly.

TOP 10 PANDEMIC PET POISONS

If you're at home, your pet can't get into mischief, right? Wrong!

According to the Pet Poison Helpline, since the pandemic started there has been a huge uptick of calls about certain household pet toxins—specifically ones associated with our new stay-at-home lifestyles and hobbies.

These are the top 10 toxins with the highest increase in calls during the pandemic:

1. Yeast (+390%)
2. Bread dough (+254%)
3. Brewed coffee (+220%)
4. Wine (+171%)
5. Cocktails (+169%)
6. Art supplies (+145%)
7. Cleaning products (+120%)
8. Paint (+118%)
9. Coffee grounds (+116%)
10. Marijuana (+80%)

Has one of these pet hazards become a fixture in your home since the pandemic started? Be sure to always keep it in your view and out of reach of curious pets when in use and tucked safely away in drawers or cupboards when no longer needed. If it is destined for the trash or recycling, be sure that your bins are securely lidded.

COVID-19 AND DOGS' SLEEP: PANDEMIC ROUTINES COULD BE STRESSING CANINES OUT BY MARY ROBINS

A new study shows dogs are more active when humans are around.
Could remote working be disturbing dogs' sleep patterns, and if so, what can we do about it?

How much of the day should a dog spend snoozing? This perennial question has felt more pressing the past year, with humans locked down at home and able to pay much closer attention to their pooches' sleeping habits. So should your dog really be sleeping for 12 hours a day? Or is there a problem? Here's the lowdown.

Healthy Sleep Patterns in Dogs

The question of how much dogs should sleep has typically been hard to answer because the research was out of date—until a new study in December. Researchers set out to determine the healthy average sleep patterns for dogs, so that they could measure how conditions such as chronic pain affect their sleep.

The researchers stress that their findings aren't designed to reveal health problems in specific dogs. "Our study showed the overall pattern, the average, for a group of healthy dogs," Dr. Margaret Gruen, assistant professor of behavioral medicine at NC State and corresponding author of the work, says. "Within that group, there was still variability, and dogs' patterns may be a bit different day-to-day." With that in mind, here's what the study found, after observing 42 healthy adult dogs aged between two and eight:

Most of the dogs studied had two peaks of activity each day: between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m., then later, between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.

All dogs were more active during weekends than on weekdays.

Female dogs seemed to be more active during the evening peak than males.

For lighter dogs, some activity occurred in a short window just after midnight.

Older dogs were less active during the peak activity windows.

The key takeaway? Dogs are more active when humans are around: in the mornings and evenings, and on weekends. Not so surprising, perhaps, but this proven fact could have a huge impact on dogs' well-being now that humans are at home more than ever.

How the Pandemic is Affecting Dogs' Rest

One person who's been sounding the alarm about dog rest levels is Dr. Stephanie Borns-Weil, Clinical Assistant Professor specializing in Animal Behavioral Medicine at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. "Dogs, like all predators, sleep a lot," Dr. Borns-Weil says. "Dogs can sleep 12 to 14 hours a day, depending on the age of the dog and of course on how much physical activity they get during the day."

So what happens when home offices and home schooling disturb the hours when dogs are used to getting some shut-eye? The consequences can be serious, Dr. Borns-Weil notes. "With COVID and the restrictions associated with COVID, there's been an explosion of dog bites," she says, citing research published in June 2020. One hospital reported an almost three-fold increase in children experiencing dog bites, based on a month-by-month comparison with 2019. Dr. Borns-Weil speculates that dogs' tiredness is feeding the trend.

Even outside of dramatic consequences, Dr. Borns-Weil has observed confusion and concern among dog owners over their dogs' perfectly normal needs for sleep and rest. Owners have come to her worried that their dog is depressed or behaving in an anti-social manner, when, in fact, they're sleeping the normal amount, and seeking solitude because they need downtime.

"What we're seeing is the dogs are around more, they don't have their normal activities, and people are around more, kids are around more, parents are working from home but they don't have attention for the kids because they're trying to work full-time," Dr. Borns-Weil notes. "So what we see is the dogs are not getting the rest and downtime that they need." She adds that, even in families that don't expect constant interaction from their dog throughout the day, the dog may feel an increased pressure to protect the home from intruders while the family is there—turning lockdown into a long period of doggy duty, in their minds.

How to Make Sure Your Dog Gets Enough Rest

So how much rest is enough, how much is too much, and how can you make sure your pup is well-rested in the new normal of pandemic life?

The starting point, Dr. Borns-Weil notes, is to “figure out what’s the normal rest for your dog.” At a certain level, you can trust your dog to tell you when they need sleep. “As the expression goes, let a sleeping dog lie,” she says.

But there are exceptions to that rule. Dr. Borns-Weil notes that dogs who don’t get enough stimulation during the day might spend more time sleeping than they need to—so start by making sure that your dog is getting enough exercise and interaction.

Once your pup has had as long a walk as they need, Dr. Borns-Weil recommends making sure they always have access to a “safe space” where they can go and be left alone—particularly if there are children in the home.

When the dog is sleeping, whether in their safe space or elsewhere, adults and children should call the dog to them, if they want to interact, rather than go to the dog’s resting place. “And when you’re calling the dog to ask to play,” Dr. Borns-Weil adds, “don’t think of it as a command, think of it as an invitation. Because some dogs, if you say come, they get up and come. It’s better to treat it like an invitation, if you’re not sure whether they’re sleeping.”

By creating the right environment for your dog to sleep comfortably when they need to, you’ll also be in a better position to judge changes to their individual sleep pattern, which can be a sign of health problems. Dr. Gruen says that “changes to the sleep-wake cycle (particularly nighttime wakefulness) is one of the main signs associated with cognitive dysfunction syndrome in dogs,” and that for dogs with chronic pain, sleep can be disturbed when they’re not on anti-inflammatory medications. But for you to notice those changes to the norm, dogs have to be allowed to rest enough to establish their own norm.

It’s been an exhausting year for everyone—dogs included. By protecting our pups’ slumber, we can make life better for them and, by extension, the whole household.

From Alyson Deines



On March 20th Helper completed her tracking champion title by earning her VST at the Belgian Club tracking test. YAY!
Special thanks to Kay for training us in this cool sport.



Rita trained for the club way back when Fon Johnson was Training Director. Somehow it is doubtful that it was all the way back in 1948 when the club was formed, but some of us that trained back in the 60's and 70's certainly remember how it was set up at the time with training rings 1-6, plus Conformation classes. There were some members who practiced Flyball with their dogs after the main classes were over.

Things really began to change back in the early 90's when membership started to drop off. Rita then started training with many other clubs until Nancy was training director and she was trying to save the club. The philosophy behind training had become a point of disagreement. Food or no food? The class structure was reorganized and instructors were trained to use food rewards with training. One of the biggest changes was when the trainers with expertise in up-and-coming dog sports could offer classes like Rally which really had started to take off in the early 2000's. That made history and undoubtedly saved the club.

As much as Rita doesn't like someone to toot her horn, she has been invaluable in sharing her expertise with the club. Over the years, she has earned several High in Trials and many First places. She worked for years to earn the Master Agility Champion Title and a Tracking Dog Title. She has also earned the Versatile Companion Dog title which rewards owners who compete in Obedience, Agility and Tracking events. An invitation to the AKC National Invitational in Obedience is also among her accomplishments.

Aside from her achievements on the courses, Rita has gone above and beyond to encourage others to get involved and compete with their own dogs. She has taught numerous members in her classes at the Zoo, and newbies to the sport will find her at trials with her helping them to find their legs and navigate their way around the show grounds.

She is an organizational leader who has encouraged and trained many people to get involved in supporting the trials by stewarding at trials. Her mentorship, positive belief and passion have helped others achieve goals that might once have seemed unattainable. If one wants to find someone worthy of a Lifetime Achievement Award, they only have to look at Rita!

Shelley Bakalis



Kathy Marmack



Bobbie Prilaman



Sandy Gonzales



Kay Hawthorne



John Schwartz



Marlys Williamson



Debbie Vachal



Aly Deines-Schartz



John, Rita, Debbie, Kathy, Aly



WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION ON

OUR MAY 8 & 9 SCENT WORK TRIALS – LORI BRISON, TRIAL SECRETARY.

AND

ANOTHER RALLY TRIAL ON MAY 15 IF APPROVED BY AKC