

Why Should You Compete?

By Christy Gammage,
Practice Makes Pawfect

I have written articles about how to know if you are ready to compete in an agility trial, or how to get ready to compete. In this article I want to cover why bother competing at all?

Reasons not to compete: 1) It is expensive. 2) It can be stressful for you and/or your dog. 3) It can be uncomfortable or boring (weather, driving, waiting). 4) While not necessarily any greater than training, there is always the chance for injury. 5) It can set back your training if you let criteria slip.

People still enter competitions despite the above reasons. Their motivations can be divided into some broad categories: human competitiveness, striving for excellence, social and financial drivers. All of these are typically in play to greater or lesser degrees within the same person. Let's explore each and how they intermingle.

All organisms must compete for a limited number of resources, such as food, shelter, and mating partners ... or ribbons. Some people are more competitive, by nature or nurture, than others. They may feel driven to beat the other competitors and delight in coming out on top. Competitiveness can be both good and bad. On the negative side, a competitive person may want to win at all costs. Those costs can be their own or their dog's health, loss of social connections with other competitors, or even unscrupulous behavior. Properly channeled, however,



competitiveness can drive the person to strive for excellence, push through problems, and achieve their goals. Striving for excellence is an admirable by-product of a competitive nature.

You don't have to be a competitive person to realize that competitions are a great motivator, roadmap, and test of your skills. To strive for excellence, excellence must

first be defined. Consistently successful competitors are seen as the embodiment of the best training, handling, and mental management skills. We look up to the people on the podium and want to be as proficient as they are. We can use the classes and levels as a roadmap in our training. The titles earned are validation that our goals are being met and progress has been made. Going to competitions is a great way to confirm that you are proofing skills you believe you have mastered. Failures during competition highlight what needs work; possibly things that you might not have considered. And finally, performing in public is often the motivation many people need to get out there and practice.

Competitions are not just public displays; they are social outings. People hang out with local friends and re-connect with distant friends. Trials are the place to 'network' for business or personal goals; pick up information on other



NADAC Championship Show

trials, seminars, judges, instructors. Even for an introvert, it is great just spending the day with your dog, away from work or a busy home life. People you see at trials become a community of like-minded people (at least about some things) and lasting friendships develop.

For others, agility is not just a hobby. Going to trials may affect their income stream if they are an instructor, judge,

product vendor, breeder, or other dog-related professional. Most of these people started agility with their own dog as a hobby, which then morphed into generating income relating to it. Ideally, they still enjoy competing with their dogs and the marketing visibility of participating in the trial is just a bonus. For instructors and even judges, being seen at trials (and better yet, performing well) can lead to more students or judging assignments. While vendors, breeders, groomers, etc. don't have the performance pressure, being seen at the trial will directly or indirectly lead to more customers.

The reasons to compete are multifaceted. Hopefully, you compete because it is fun for you and the dog. Because it is somehow rewarding; through recognition, goal attainment, social connection or financially. When you do compete, be certain you are doing it for the right reasons; your dog is having fun, it is meeting your needs, and you are as successful as possible. Better Practice.

May 4th All About Horses at Little Manatee River State Park



Mark your calendars for Saturday May 4th to attend the All About Horses event at the Little Manatee River State Park in Wimauma! This is A FREE event to invite Lovers of Horses and our local State Park Little Manatee River to a day to enjoy both while being entertained and educated.

The Friends of LMRSP have put together an event everyone in the family should enjoy! Our first All About Horses was such a success we decided to make it an annual event. There will be displays-speakers-food-games and noon a "Parade of Breeds" to show off horse from the

tinest to the largest and some unusual breeds in between. Last year we learned a lot on what we needed to do make this event even better experience. A better PA system so the announcer can be heard while speaking on the many breeds during the Parade. More parking and more speakers and there will be actives for the young horse lovers provided by local horse clubs. Displays -information on horse rescue-training stables-local horse rentals-Cowboys to speak on Cracker horse history, bull whips and tack & farrier display- horse health speakers and more to interest all.

Donkey Bingo-raffles-Fun wheel of Luck to spin and win prizes provided by the State Parks and some tasty snacks made by the Friends groups. So mark your calendar for

Saturday May 4th, 10AM to 2PM, gates open at 9AM. Free Admission to event-enter at Event Field on Lightfoot road pass main gate and follow signs. There will be additional parking in the park. The event is Free but there will be fees for food-vendor items-affles-t-shirts50/50 and Donkey Bingo so bring some cash.

For more information visit <http://www.FriendsOfTheLittleManatee.Org> or call 813-677-9291. For special needs call Park Office813-671-5005 and ask for Jordan. This Event provided by Friends of the Little Manatee River State Park a 501C3 organization support group and The Florida State Parks.

New Foal on the way? Time to Babyproof the Nursery for Optimum Safety

The happy event is this Spring... and the wait is almost over. Normal gestation period for the horse is 340 days, but 320 to 370 days may actually happen, depending on the breed and the individual mare. Your anticipated champion will soon be here—to train in a chosen discipline or sport, or maybe you've bred for a special pet horse or pony to cherish and enjoy all its life. Congratulations, and may all go well.

Obvious safety inspections are a must— of the barn, paddocks and pasture, and also the footing.

Search the fencing and stalls for protruding nails, screws or treacherous wire that could harm the inquisitive baby.

Remove downed tree limbs, and put on gloves to pull up

sandspurs. Dig deep to kill any cactus or stinging nettle and add all this stuff to the burn pile.

There is controversy on whether to keep a halter on a horse, especially a foal or colt. Although it might make catching one easier, there are critical reasons why not to leave one on 24/7. Halters can catch on most anything, like tree limbs, gate latches and (worse) faucets on water tubs. Tough nylon or leather halters won't give, and can cause serious injuries or worse. Some large farms use neck bands to easily identify who's who from a distance, made of a material designed to break if caught on something unyielding. Rely on your judgment and common sense.



The place for dog sporting fun
Orlando, FL

Agility Field Rentals
Trials and Seminars
Fun Runs
Structured Practice

Christy Gammage
@agility@gammage.org
PracticeMakesPawfect.com