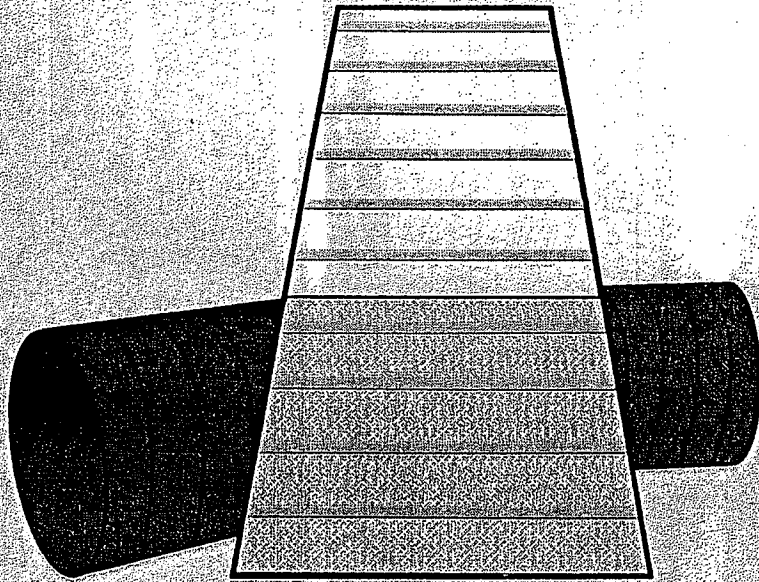


Agility



Safety Guidelines

"Putting Agility on a safe course"

Prepared by the Agility Advisory Committee on behalf of the South Australian Canine Association Inc.

AGILITY

AGILITY

IS

Action

while having

Great fun

Interesting

while

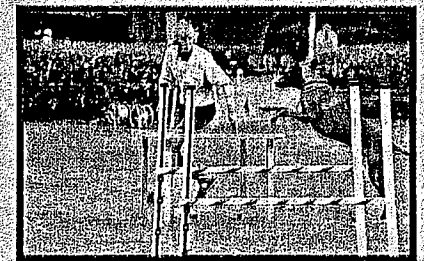
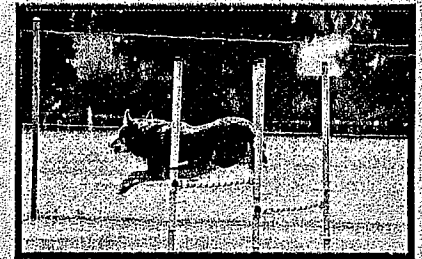
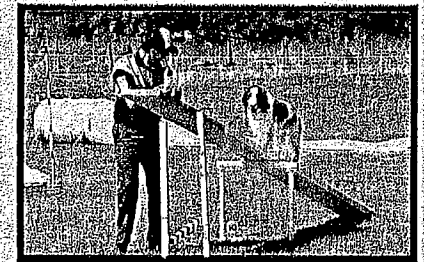
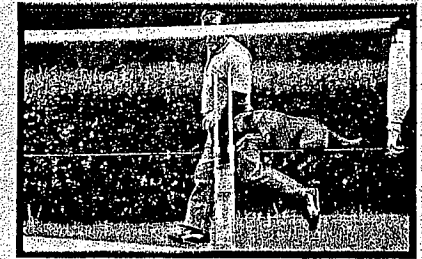
Learning

Impressive

Teamwork

you

Yearn for



Agility is a fun sport for dogs and owners to get fit together.

Hurdles – Tunnels – Hoops – Seesaws are just some of the obstacles you will learn.

Come and have some fun!!

SAFETY AND THE RISKS IN AGILITY

Agility is a sport that has been growing in numbers over recent years. There has been a growing concern and ongoing debate for some time regarding the safety and the risk of injury to handler and dog in agility. There is a certain amount of risk in everything we do in life but risk assessment is never easy.

As far as agility is concerned we must always try and make things as safe as possible. These Agility Safety Guidelines will provide the information for those who do agility to enable them to enjoy safe agility for both dog and handler.

CLUB'S/INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure training/trialing grounds are kept in good order i.e. the grass is mowed regularly to avoid it becoming too long or too spongy: A build up of thatching may make the surface slippery or cause tripping.
- The equipment meets the safety standards (*to be advised when standards ratified*), and is maintained at this level.
- Implement a procedure to ensure all members engaging in agility receive a copy and training in these guidelines.
- Adopt a training/trialing policy for hot weather.
- Instructors to actively promote safety guidelines as part of the instruction given.
- Ensure that instruction given to handlers is up to date and will allow the dogs and handlers to learn enhanced skills that will allow a safe progression to each level of the sport.
- To act on any safety concern brought to its attention.

HANDLER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- To be aware of the Agility Safety Guidelines and report any safety concern to the Judge, Trial Manager or Instructor, so action may be taken to rectify or alleviate the concern.
- The Handler has the ultimate responsibility for deciding whether a sequence or a course at training or a trial can be handled safely

within the capabilities of themselves and their dog.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- To ensure the course is set to the ANKC Agility Judge's guidelines.
- Be prepared to make adjustments to the course should the conditions (ground, weather etc.) warrant this.

COMPETITORS

CLOTHING / SUN PROTECTION



Consideration should be given to the type of clothing worn while competing and training. Clothing should be non-restrictive and allow freedom of movement while running the course. Normal sun protection procedures apply at all times, with regards to clothing, sunscreen and adequate shade when not competing or training. Suitable footwear is essential. Non-slip soled running shoes or boots should be worn to provide maximum grip, appropriate to the surface and conditions. Running spikes shall not be worn.

FLUID / ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Agility requires split-second decisions and may require the handler to be able to navigate around the obstacles quickly in order to guide their dog around the course.

It is recommended that no alcohol be consumed while trialing or training. As a guide, treat running the course in the same manner as you would driving a car. Alcohol consumption also contributes towards dehydration and should not be consumed as normal fluid replacement in hot weather. Ensure that you drink adequate amounts of water or other appropriate fluids at all times, but especially in hot conditions.



FITNESS / HEALTH

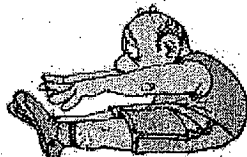


A reasonable level of physical fitness is required to compete or train in Agility. If you have any doubt as to your fitness or health with regards to the suitability to compete in agility, it is recommended that you consult your doctor for advice.

Handlers that have a reduced level of fitness could help reduce the stress upon themselves by ensuring that they learn handling techniques that will enable them to handle their dogs competently whilst taking a shorter path around the course themselves.

WARM UP

To minimise the risk of injury it is recommended that handlers undergo a warm up procedure prior to training or trialing. A suitable pre-agility warm-up should consist of running, jogging or a brisk walk to warm up the muscles. Stretching of the muscles most likely to be used in agility should follow this.



PREGNANCY



Agility can place higher physical and mental demands upon handlers. It is recommended that pregnant women advise their doctors of the demands in agility appropriate to them. In consultation with their doctor, handlers can make an informed decision about their continuation with agility.

DOGS

FITNESS/WEIGHT/AGE SUITABILITY

Agility requires the dogs to run fast and jump frequently. It is a participant's responsibility to ensure their dog is a suitable weight, fitness

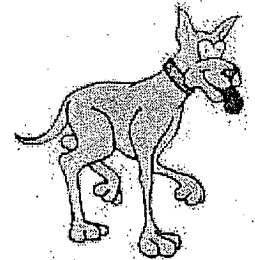


and age to train and compete without being placed under undue physical stress. If you are unsure about your dog's fitness, weight or age suitability consult your veterinary surgeon.

BREED / PHYSICAL SUITABILITY

While it is desirable to have as many breeds as possible involved in agility, the reality is that some breeds, due to their size and physical attributes, are less suited to the sport than others. Give consideration to your dog's health

and well being should you have a dog that would be considered to have greater than normal physical demands placed upon it by competing in agility.



SHADE/SHELTER/WATER

During a trial day or training session, the dogs may be required to be on the grounds for many hours.

Ensure that they have adequate shade, shelter, and water so they are not placed under undue stress at any time.



WARM UP



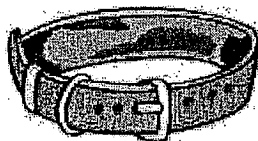
It is recommended that you perform a warm up procedure for your dog to minimise the risk of injury. As with the handlers, a pre-agility warm-up could consist of a jog or run to warm up the muscles, followed by some stretches. Some easy jumping and changes of direction should give your dog a good chance of stretching the majority of muscles used in agility.

GROOMING

It is recommended that the dog's nails be kept trimmed, and the feathering between the dog's toes and pads be clipped to allow maximum grip on agility equipment and the ground.

COLLAR

It is the handler's decision whether to run a dog with or without a collar. If you choose to run a dog with a collar, ensure that it is a suitable type and fitted correctly [i.e. A fixed collar, suggest 2 fingers of a persons hand be able to fit between dog and collar]. A slip collar or other tightening type collars are not permitted in competition and should not be used in training as they pose a significant risk to the dog should it catch on anything whilst negotiating obstacles.



EQUIPMENT & COURSE DESIGN

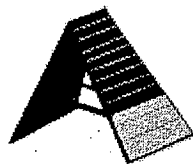
SAFETY STANDARD



All agility equipment will eventually comply with a minimum safety standard, [*now being developed*]. However, should you be concerned about any piece of equipment, raise your concern with the judge and/or trial manager or instructor before the trial or training begins.

You should be satisfied that:

- Table, tunnels, hoops, seesaws, scrambles and dog-walks are all stable and securely fixed or pegged.
- The ends of all tubing are covered, so that if a dog or handler was to fall on top of it, the hollow tube would not pierce them.
- Check for any sharp protruding areas on the equipment, e.g. Sharp ends on tubing or any protruding nails or screws.



- Check for splinters on all wooden surfaces or cleats.
- Check that equipment surfaces are not too slippery as these vary greatly dependent on weather conditions and the type of surface used by the club.
- Check the ring for any tools or unused equipment that may be left out.
- Check that obstacle numbers are not placed in the possible path of the dog or handler.

COURSE DESIGN/ANGLED APPROACHES

When a judge or instructor designs a course, consideration shall be given to both dog and handler. Judges have been issued with ANKC Agility Trials Guidelines for Judges. This outlines recommended approach angle limitations for Novice, Open and Master Classes respectively. Judges shall design courses that comply with these guidelines. It is likely that at some stage you will confront a course with angled approaches to equipment outside these guidelines. It is recommended that you discuss this with your judge at his briefing prior to the commencement of the trial. Practice of the more common approach angles should be done to enable the dog and handler to be able to cope with and be familiar with different approaches. In addition, training should continue to progress with regards to techniques and experience with the more difficult approach angles. When walking a course, competitors should take particular note of angled approaches to tyres, scrambles, dog-walks, seesaws and spread hurdles.



ANKC GUIDELINES

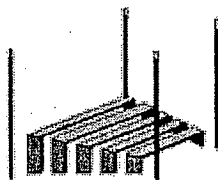
NOVICE CLASS: Approach angles to any obstacle shall generally not be greater than 90 degrees.

OPEN CLASS: Approach angles to any obstacle shall generally not be greater than 135 degrees.

MASTER CLASS: Approach angles to any obstacle shall generally not be greater than 180 degrees.

WALKING THE COURSE

When walking the course, competitors shall be observant. They shall take note of where equipment is placed in relation to the path you intend to take when running the course, e.g. Where the see saw up plank is in relation to your intended path, etc. Also consider the dog's path and where equipment may present a safety concern, not only on the expected path, but also in the event that the dog takes a less predictable path, e.g. the dog takes a wider turn than normal, heading towards the wrong piece of equipment, etc. Handlers should walk the course not just to learn the sequence of obstacles but also to work out a plan of action on how they will safely navigate their dog around the course using the most appropriate handling technique. They shall consider where they expect their dog to be at all times and know what path they will take.



WEATHER CONDITIONS

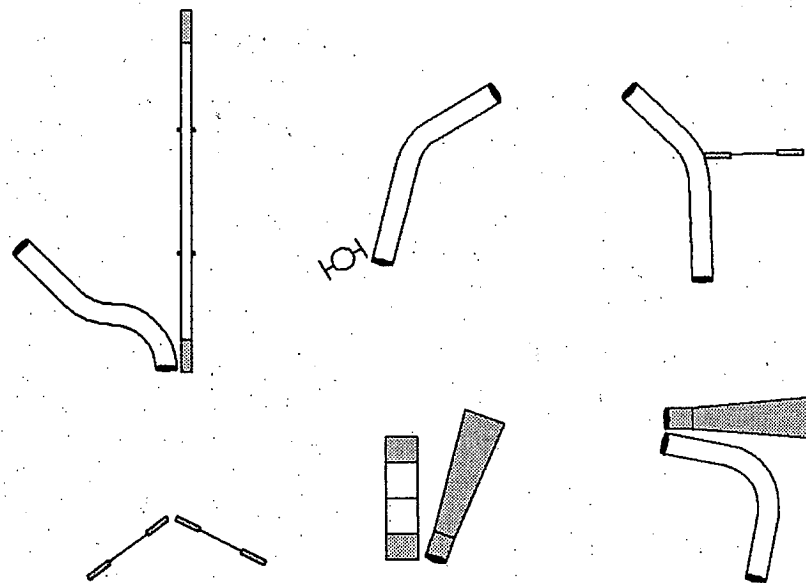
It is important to allow for inclement weather when planning to run the course, should there be any possibility of it occurring. Consider the effect of wet conditions on the contact surfaces and how it will affect your dog's ability to grip the grass, which may become slippery. You may need to modify your dog's approach to some equipment with regards to the angle and the amount of distance needed for the dog to turn. This will minimise the risk of the dog either falling off or sliding and crashing into equipment.

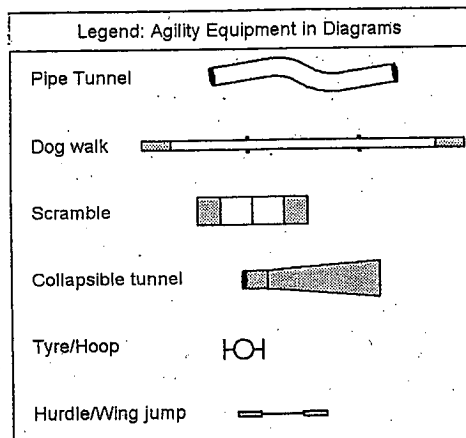


HANDLING CHALLENGES

Agility is a sport where progression to the higher levels mean that judges will be looking for an expanded level of handling skills and

techniques. This may mean that competitors are confronted with course designs that restrict handling options. Competitors will need to expand their repertoire of handling techniques to be able to cope with course designs that may limit where a handler may run. For example, judges can employ course designs that have two obstacles abutting or very close to each other that may compel handlers to handle on one side or the other, or to work wide of their dog. The following are examples of the possible situations that may be set to challenge handling skills. In these examples the contacts, pipe tunnels and jumping obstacles could be done in either direction.





COURSE CHALLENGES

The progression through the sport of agility should see a corresponding progression of skill level to enable the dog and handler to be able to cope with different scenarios. Some of the challenges for handlers to learn to deal with are:

- **Call-Off:** Is a challenge on the course in which there is an incorrect obstacle directly in the dog's path. The dog must be "called off" with a directional command to turn toward the correct obstacle.
- **Options:** Is a point on the course where the dog has a choice of direction, similar to a "fork in the road".
- **Obstacle Discrimination:** Is a point on the course in which two obstacles are placed in close proximity, requiring the handler to direct the dog to the correct choice.
- **Side Changes:** Is a place where the course requires the handler to switch from handling the dog on the left to handling on the right, or vice versa. A handler who opts not to switch sides is forced to run around the outside of the obstacles and must run faster than the dog to keep up.
- **Lead-Out Advantage:** Is an incentive for the handler to leave the dog at the start line or table and "lead out" to a position several obstacles ahead to ensure he will be in position for an upcoming control point on the course.

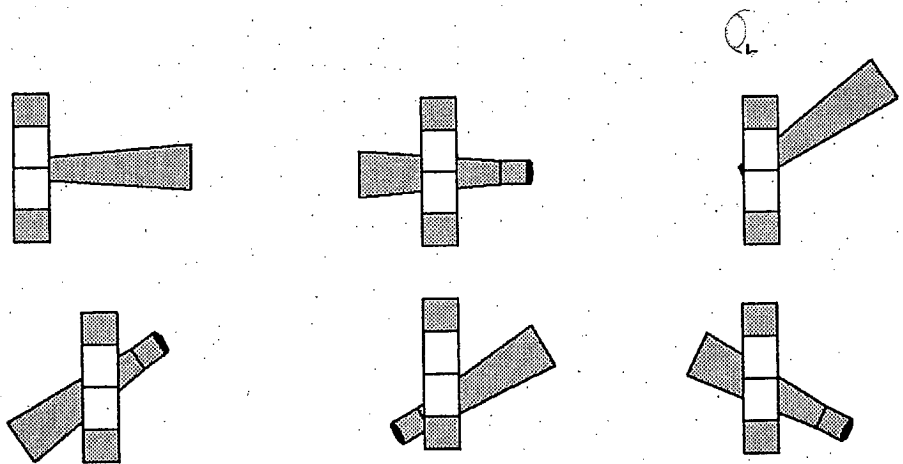
- **Weave-On-Right Advantage:** Is the opportunity for the dog to perform the weave poles from the right side of the handler.
- **Angled Approaches To Obstacles:** The greater the angle of approach to an obstacle, the more skill is required of the dog and/or handler. The burden falls mostly on the skill level of the dog in high-speed situations, or when the handler is at a significant distance from the dog.
- **Handler Restrictions:** The placement of an obstacle near a barrier or near another obstacle can restrict the handler from handling on a particular side or may force the handler to control the dog at a distance.

TUNNELS UNDER CONTACTS

The following are examples of the possible combinations of tunnels under contacts that a Judge can use in the Open and Master Classes. It is recommended that competitors familiarise themselves and their dog to all possible combinations in order to be best prepared to handle the challenges safely.

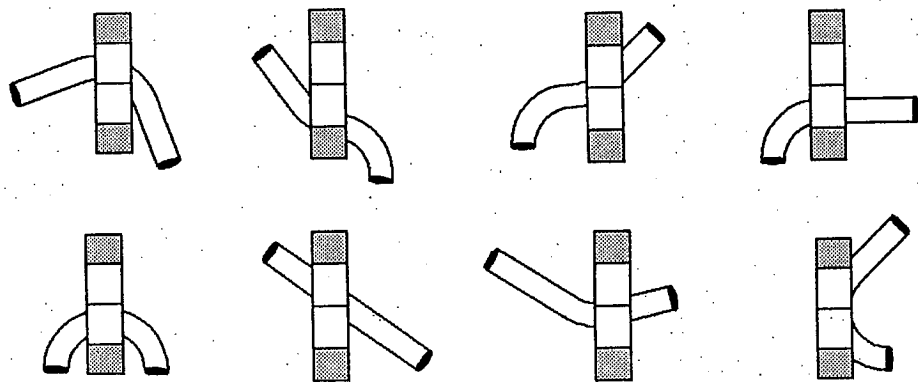
COLLAPSIBLE TUNNEL UNDER SCRAMBLE

The collapsible tunnel shall be positioned so that the chute will not be able to contact any part of the scramble both under normal use or in the event that the dog gets tangled in the chute and falls over. Ensure that the tunnel chute is pegged and straight. The collapsible tunnel shall be positioned so that the approach to it or the scramble is not blocked. The following are examples of the possible positions for the collapsible tunnel and scramble. The scramble could be done from either or both sides.



PIPE TUNNEL UNDER SCRAMBLE

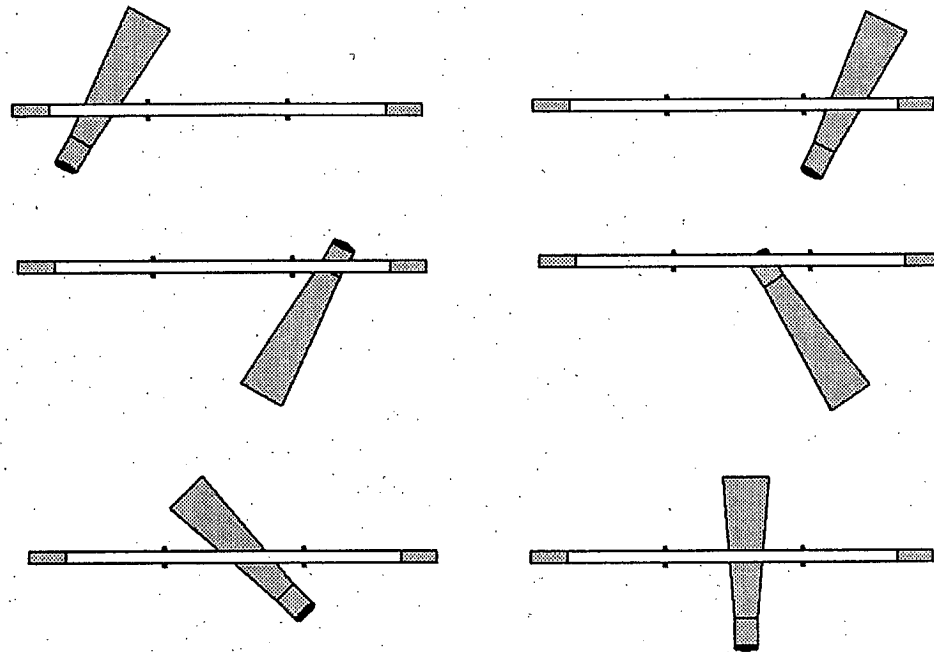
The pipe tunnel shall be positioned so that the approach to it or the scramble is not blocked. The following are examples of possible positions for the pipe tunnel and scramble. The pipe tunnel or scramble could be done from either or both sides. Ensure that the pipe tunnel is securely fixed. If a restraining device is used ensure that it does not reduce the overall height of the tunnel.



COLLAPSIBLE TUNNEL UNDER WALK

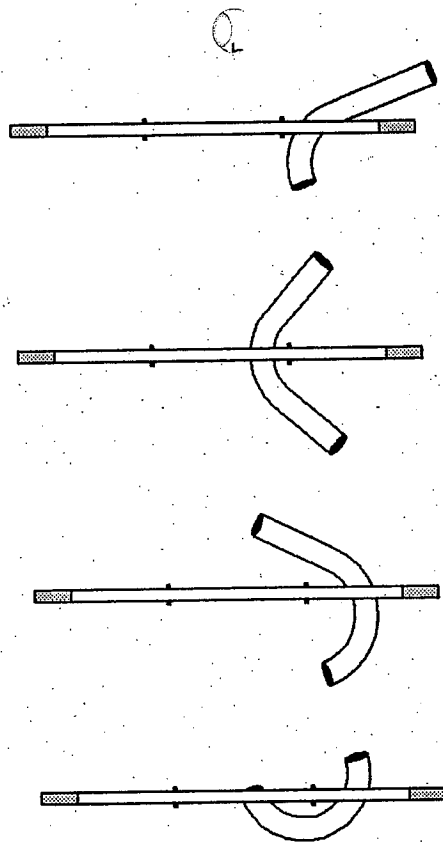
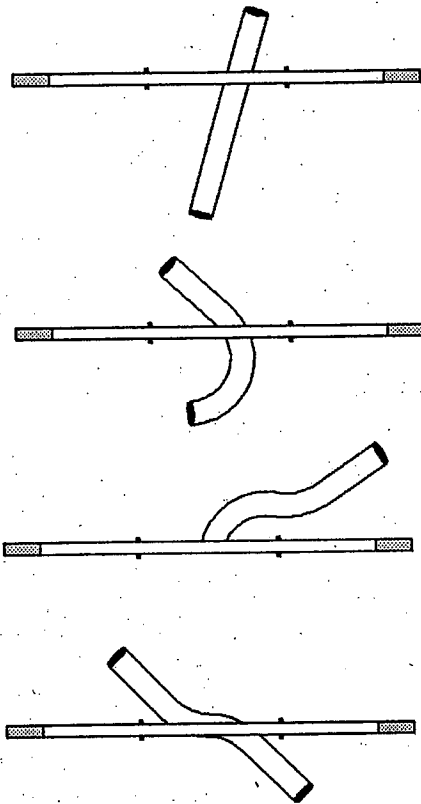
The collapsible tunnel shall be positioned so that the chute will not be able to contact any part of the walk both under normal use and in

the event that the dog gets tangled in the chute and falls over. The collapsible tunnel shall be positioned so that the approach to it, or the walk is not blocked. The following are examples of possible positions for the collapsible tunnel and walk. The walk could be done from either or both sides.



PIPE TUNNEL UNDER WALK

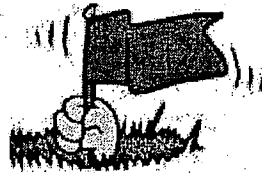
The pipe tunnel shall be positioned so that the approach to it or the walk is not blocked. The following are examples of possible positions for the pipe tunnel and walk. The pipe tunnel or the walk could be done from either or both sides.



GROUNDS

GRASSED SURFACE

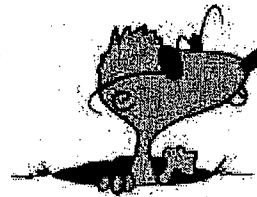
Whilst clubs endeavour to have their trial and training grounds mowed prior to a trial or training session, there are occasions when the grass may be long or spongy, making it difficult for both handler and dog to run. On these occasions extreme care is needed to avoid sliding or tripping over.



UNDULATING OR WATERLOGGED SURFACE

When walking the course observe the ground for undulation or a waterlogged surface. If there are areas of concern, point them out to the judge/instructor. The judge/instructor shall bring the areas of concern to the attention of all handlers pointing out the safety hazard. In any event, plan your run to avoid these areas.

SPRINKLER HEADS/POST HOLES



When walking the course take note of any sprinkler heads or postholes not covered. Point out these to the judge/instructor as not all competitors may notice them and the judge/instructor may consider redesigning the course so as to place the hazard in a position

where it is less likely to be encountered by a dog or handler. If competing the handler should consider their path and that of their dog, so they can avoid the hazard.

LIGHTS/SUN

Trials held at night pose additional problems with visibility, as may the sun during the day. While dogs seem to cope well at night, they are at risk of being temporarily blinded when jumping toward the lights or into the sun.

Also obstacles may be placed in such a way that they are in shadow to the dog or facing the sun when attempting to negotiate them. This may cause the dog to miss-time its leap. When walking the course, take these into consideration. It may require the handler to approach some obstacles at a different angle to the one that may normally be used to avoid these situations. If you believe the design of the course in relation to the lighting or sun could be hazardous then you must inform the judge/instructor of your concerns. The judge/instructor may be able to resolve it by adjusting the positions of some equipment.



GENERAL

Work your dog according to the dog's experience and ability. If a certain course looks too tight, too difficult, too high, too long etc, do not work your dog on that course. You have the choice of whether to continue competing or training. The safety of you and your dog should be uppermost in your mind at all times



Do not exacerbate any health problems by continuing to compete or train with your dog when it has been diagnosed with problems such as spinal spondylitis, arthritis, a heart problem, etc. Although it is better to keep your dog fit rather than to wrap it in cotton wool, you have to weigh the pros and cons carefully. Your veterinary surgeon should be able to help

you make this decision.

Safety in agility is the concern and responsibilities of all that make the sport happen: handlers, clubs, instructors, judges and stewards. It is important that everyone is mindful of possible safety issues and is vigilant for possible hazards or safety concerns. With a diligent approach towards safety uppermost in everyone's mind and observation of these safety guidelines, it is possible to reduce the risk of injuries so that agility should be a fun and healthy sport.