

## OPEN LETTER OCTOBER 2015

### TO THE KENNEL CLUB REGARDING THE INTRODUCTION OF A 4<sup>TH</sup> HEIGHT IN KENNEL CLUB LICENSED AGILITY TESTS

The agility community has been showing growing interest in the introduction of a 4<sup>th</sup> hurdle height at 550mm in Kennel Club Agility for more than 8 years now. In January 2013, the subject was referred to the KC's Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group for research.

As 2015 approached, there were still no findings available and no research had been done involving a 550mm hurdle. In an attempt to kick start the process again, a formal Proposal for a 4<sup>th</sup> height category was made to the KC's Agility Liaison Council January 2015 meeting.

There was overwhelming support for the Proposal at ALC regional meetings held during December 2014 and January 2015.

After considering all of the feedback received at these meetings, the ALC agreed the principle of a review of current hurdle heights but agreed to **defer** any decision until the current research, which was investigating all hurdle heights, was complete and the results available. The progress report from the AHWSG, dated May 2015, says "It was accepted that there were many variables involved and that it would not be possible for research to provide a simple answer to the questions currently being asked."

Research has been "ongoing" since 2013, but to date only one piece of work has been done which involved measuring a dog's height and its performance over both 550mm and 650mm hurdles. This took place in April 2015 and was conducted at the Royal Veterinary College.

The ALC decided in January 2015 that, although there was very strong support at all the regional meetings for this change, they wanted to be certain that there were no welfare issues that would stop this change being accepted. The January and May 2015 AHWSG progress reports have stated that the results of research projects would be available in September, and a report due by an agreed deadline of December 2015, which would mean that the ALC can consider it at their January 2016 meeting.

It now looks like this deadline may be missed and sometime in 2016 is the best we can hope for. If this is the case, should we all be expected to wait indefinitely? The support and enthusiasm for this change is overwhelming and there are messages of approval from around the world, never mind within the UK. Many welfare professionals and breed clubs have endorsed the Proposal, including Fitzpatrick Referrals, who have gone as far as sponsoring competitions at this proposed height at KC shows throughout this year - and are already committed to continuing next year, so strong is their belief that this is necessary. In addition, an increasing number of KC shows are offering special 4<sup>th</sup> height classes as part of their schedules, such is the demand.

**We ask the KC and the ALC to commit to one of two ways forward and to report this through a general agenda item at the January 2016 ALC meeting. There is plenty of precedent for this type of action – decisions taken by the KC are often communicated this way.**

### **Option 1**

We believe that it is very unlikely that reasons not to do this based on animal welfare will come from the research. This Proposal should be endorsed now, immediately after which a working party should be established to implement the changes as laid out in the Proposal.

### **Option 2**

Should the RVC research data be delayed, extend the deferral period for a maximum of two months to allow the results to be reported, immediately after which a working party should be established to implement the changes necessary to ensure that any animal welfare concerns raised are addressed. If the research data indicated any concerns with any height of dog to hurdle ratio, this could mean a review of ALL hurdle heights and changes to every height category. If no welfare concerns are raised the working party would proceed as for Option 1.

**There is absolutely no reason why a deferral period has to be tied to ALC meeting dates. As soon as the data is available, the working party can start.**

**Many of the people that have been involved in this Proposal for so many years are willing to help in any way they can and we urge the Kennel Club to move forward as soon as possible.**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Height Supporters**

Website: <http://areyou4it.org.uk/>

Email: [fourth\\_height@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fourth_height@yahoo.co.uk)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/123817961094745/>