

Introduction to Judging at K9 Kup

K9 Kup Mission Statement

To be a learning experience for:

- 1) Handlers*
- 2) Dogs*
- 3) Volunteers (Timers, scribes, gatekeepers, etc.)*
- 4) Judges*

To provide the participants, human and canine, with an AAC Starters trial-like experience.

To promote an expectation of fun and good sportsmanship, with a focus on learning not winning. K9 Kup is rooted in the values of the AAC.

To encourage responsible dog ownership and safe participation, and to educate the public on the sport of agility, as rooted in the Paws4Fun mission statement.

Introduction

Welcome to judging at K9 Kup. This is an opportunity to learn more about judging and about AAC rules; whether you're thinking about becoming an agility judge or just looking to improve your understanding of the sport.

Here are the things you should know prior to your first judging assignment.

Philosophy

Here are the "commandments" listed in the AAC Judge's Handbook (reprinted with permission, slightly modified):

1. Arrive early, check the equipment and be ready to go on schedule.
2. Dress as befitting a Judge. Strive to appear neat, clean and neutral in appearance at all times when in the ring. Ripped jeans, sweatpants and breed- or club-specific items are to be avoided.
3. Explain decisions only as procedure dictates.
4. Avoid arguing with competitors about calls. Be firm yet polite at all times.
5. Signal faults in a timely manner, neither too quickly nor too late (ideally, you should signal within one obstacle of the fault).
6. Plan your judging path and move smoothly to ensure you are in a position to make the correct calls without interfering with the dog or the handler.
7. Always pay attention to the dog on course.
8. Be alert and interested. Concentrate on the job at hand.
9. As a courtesy to the handler and to ensure safety, continue judging even after a dog has been eliminated.
10. Call it as you see it; you cannot call a fault if you do not see it. Give the benefit of the doubt to the dog.

11. Do not be distracted by your cell phone.
12. Enjoy yourself, be approachable and create a pleasant environment within your ring. Agility should be fun for Judge, handler, dog and spectators alike.

Rules

As closely as possible, K9 Kup mimics an AAC trial and is based on AAC rules, with some modifications. **The first requirement for a K9 Kup judge is to know and understand AAC rules.** You can find the AAC Rule Book and recent updates at <https://www.aac.ca/en/aac-rulebook>. This document will reference specific sections of the Rule Book.

As well, anyone interested in judging should watch runs at regular trials and observe the judge's calls.

Course Design

Course design is a basic responsibility of agility judges. K9 Kup judges are encouraged to design courses for K9 Kup events, but courses will be provided as needed. The K9 Kup Coordinator will ensure there is an experienced Judge-In-Training Mentor available to assist and mentor, and to approve any courses before use.

While agility in general and K9 Kup in particular allow people to learn from their mistakes, special care must be taken to ensure course designs and builds are appropriate for the level (pre-Starters in K9 Kup) and safe for all dogs, whatever their size, speed, or experience. A K9 Kup course must be basic. A boring course is a good thing (the dogs will bring the excitement!). Remember when designing courses to consider where you as the judge are going to need to be – is there a path which will allow you to see all the contacts, have a clear view of the weaves, and stay out of the path of the handler and dog in the ring?

Course Build

K9 Kup judges are required to attend the course builds the day before any event at which they judge. Their job is not to help with the course build but, with the guidance of an experienced Judge-In-Training Mentor, to tweak and measure the course, calculate course times, discuss safety issues and judging questions (such as the judge's path). If you do not attend the course build the day before the event you will not be permitted to judge during the event.

Briefings

Before each event, competitors need to be briefed. For K9 Kup, the briefing must quickly review the rules of the game and point out significant information about the course (for example, start and finish lines). A briefing must quickly give competitors relevant information but cannot give an exhaustive explanation of the game being

played. Competitors can turn to the AAC Rule Book, their instructors, and the team captain and more experienced team members for further information and advice.

We recommend practicing your briefing in advance to make sure you can provide essential information clearly and quickly.

You will receive a separate document containing more information about briefings before your first judging assignment.

Judging

You will have a Mentor Judge with you in the ring at all times. This is an experienced AAC judge who will support you and provide you with additional opportunities to learn during your time as a Judge-In-Training.

Before the first dog in each division runs, check in with the timer and scribe and review all pertinent information (start/finish lines, signals, point values in Snooker and Gamblers, etc.). Let the timer know how they can tell that you are ready for them to press the “go” horn for each competitor – for example giving them a thumbs up, or holding your hands behind your back. Make sure the timer knows when to start and stop the time and knows the maximum course time (MCT).

At last, you’re standing in the ring, with the first dog about to start its run. Take a deep breath – young dogs can be wild and unpredictable! Observe the run carefully and call faults as you see them – remembering that for close calls, the benefit of the doubt goes to the dog.

Appendix 1 gives an overview of the possible faults and signals, noting any differences from AAC Starters rules. It remains the responsibility of each judge to be familiar with the relevant sections of the AAC Rule Book.

Even the most experienced judges make mistakes. The goal is not to be perfect, but to be fair and consistent and to keep learning and improving. Correct errors immediately when you can (for example, advising the scribe or scorekeeper to add or remove faults, or giving a rerun if circumstances justify it).

After each run, ensure that everything is in order. Did the dog knock down bars? Did any equipment move or seem unsafe? Ensure that the next dog can get a clean and safe run.

Be prepared for questions or complaints from competitors (directly, or through the team captain – note that only the competitor or team captain are allowed to question specific calls).

Respond to any such questions to the best of your ability. Perhaps, thinking it over, you will decide a call should be changed – if so, immediately advise the scribe (or the scorekeeper if the score sheets have already been picked up). In some cases, it may be

helpful to explain a decision (for example, in Snooker, “you had already performed that Red jump and you’re not allowed to repeat a Red”.)

Judges can’t remember every moment of every run, so sometimes the answer will simply be “I can’t remember that moment; the call stands”.

In the end, however, the judge’s decisions are final. Do not engage in prolonged discussions with competitors, especially during an event while the next dog is waiting to run.

Appendix 1 Agility Faults and Points

K9 Kup need to know and understand AAC rules and scoring. Please review the following sections of the AAC Rule Book (<https://www.aac.ca/en/aac-rulebook>):

- 2.5 – Judges & Stewards
- 2.9 – Course Layouts
- 2.10 – Course Times
- 2.11 – Course Handling & General Faults
- 2.12 – Accidents & Other Unforeseen Events
- 2.13 – Electronic Timing
- 3.2 – Starters Standard Agility Class
- 3.6 – Gamblers
- 3.7 – Jumpers
- 3.8 – Snooker
- 3.9 – Steeplechase
- 4.5 – Junior Handlers General Rules
- Chapter 5 – Obstacle Performance Standards
- Appendix A – Scoring Summary
- Appendix B – Definitions

Calling Faults

Faults are called in Standard, Jumpers, and Steeplechase. See the definition of the faults in Appendix B of the AAC Rule Book. This document only addresses *differences* from standard AAC Starters rules for K9 Kup (*text in italics*).

5 faults (Open hand)



Applies to:

- knocked bar
- opened tire
- missed contact
- wrong course
- touching the dog
- handler touching the dog or obstacles

10 faults (two open hands)



Fly-off (teeter)

Note: Judges can also call 10 faults for unsafe execution, even if the performance does not meet the definition of a fly-off.

Refusal (Closed fist)



Refusal (jumps and tunnels only in Starters)

Note: Refusals are called in K9 Kup, but not scored.

Non-Completion (Two closed fists)



Note: Judges should call (or estimate) the number of obstacles not completed by the dog.

Obstacle Repetition (Hands forming a T)



Handler deliberately making the dog repeat a completed obstacle.

Note: In K9 Kup, Obstacle Repetition is scored as a Wrong Course, so the signal needs to be given for each repeated obstacle.

Elimination

Dog eliminating in the ring, abuse, unsportsmanlike conduct. The judge blows their whistle, and the dog and handler must leave the field. Any instances of abuse must be reported to the K9 Kup Coordinator.

Awarding Points

Points are awarded in Gamblers and Snooker. Please make sure you know the point values of obstacles and combinations at the start of the run.

You must also know which actions will lead to the run being terminated in Snooker, or to elimination in Gamblers (consult the appropriate sections of the AAC Rule Book).

Call out points loudly to ensure the scribe can hear you. Raise one open hand for points in Snooker and for single obstacles in Gamblers; raise two open hands for mini-gambles in Gamblers.

Make sure that the scribe knows the values of mini-gambles, so they know what values they will hear.

If an obstacle or combination is not performed correctly (knocked bar, missed contact, etc.), call out ZERO and sweep one hand outward at waist level as a visual signal. Calling out the ZERO quickly lets the handler know the obstacle was not scored and allows them to adjust their strategy (for example, needing to find another Red jump after knocking a bar on a Red jump in Snooker.)