

Meeting With Southern Region Obedience Clubs

Airport Gateway & Airport Boutique, 45 Roydvale Ave, Christchurch

Friday 1st August 2014

Present:

Geoff Collins – Obedience Committee Chairperson
Peter Dunne – NZKC Director/Secretary
North Canterbury Dog Training Club
Christchurch Dog Training Club
Canterbury Canine Obedience Club
Selwyn Dog Training Club
South Island German Shepherd League
Southern Golden Retriever Club

Apologies:

Southland Dog Training Club
Otago Canine Training Club
South Canterbury Dog Training Club

Goal of the meeting:

The intention of the meeting was to hear the views of obedience clubs on what things were of most concern to them and what could possibly be done to help grow the clubs and increase participation in club and competition activities. This is in recognition of the general decline in club membership and numbers at obedience shows and the fact that many clubs are struggling to survive.

Issues:

Some of the issues identified as making things difficult were:

- Lack of keen people to go on committees and to help run shows
- Lack of good venues, especially in winter. Cancellations made it difficult to maintain continuity
- Trainers
 - Getting sufficient numbers
 - Appropriate skill/qualifications
 - Maintaining and inspiring sufficient motivation in the trainers
 - Avoiding burning out trainers by overusing them due to small numbers
- Advertising expense for club promotion
- When asked if some advertising of clubs by the NZKC in the major newspapers might help some noted that a big campaign to get people to flock to the dog training clubs wouldn't really be helpful as they would not have enough handlers to be able to cope. Getting more competent trainers was seen as a key issue.
- Holding on to people. The majority leave after one or two domestic classes but we need to encourage them to stay so they can go on to be committee members, trainers, competitive Rally-O or Obedience people etc.
- Perception of "obedience" as not fun. Many people see obedience as serious and possibly boring whereas agility is generally seen as a fun activity. Terms used (like obedience) can be misleading.

Ideas to help:

- An on-line show programme that all clubs could use would help with the running of shows (on-line entries and payments, dog and handler database to help with preparation of catalogue) so people would be less reluctant to volunteer
- Training could be provided for show secretaries and other roles to give some guidance
- NZKC (or possibly Dogs New Zealand if NZKC adopts this) should be a brand used by all clubs so the good work that the NZKC clubs do in training dogs becomes more visible to the public, politicians etc. This may allow NZKC to get more support and funding that could be used to help the clubs.
- Councils should have a record of all local dog training clubs and should ideally encourage dog owners to the nearest club when they are registering a new dog. This would be a benefit to clubs by bringing in more people as well as to the councils by having better-behaved dogs in the community.
- Having mentors available at the clubs to help with specific training difficulties and maybe to take some dogs aside for some one-on-one help. Often it is difficult for trainers to deal with these situations in a class environment. These mentors require appropriate training of course.
- A training programme for dog trainers, possibly leading to a formal qualification, was seen as a great idea by those present to increase skill level as well as the confidence of those carrying out the training. It was suggested that the new Dog Trainers Association of New Zealand might be an appropriate body to run such a programme. **GEOFF** to talk to Karen Sadler (the DTANZ chairperson).
- Geoff mentioned the record of achievement booklet that some clubs use for their domestic handlers. This allows them to track their progress with their dogs by ticking off the various exercises (e.g. food manners, sit, recall, stay) as these are mastered. The booklet could have squares for each exercise and you put a sticker on them as they are achieved. It not only gives a stronger sense of progress but also shows the things they haven't yet mastered and so encourages them to strive to completely fill in the booklet. The idea is to encourage them to keep coming back.
- It would be good to have a compact disc with information and videos of what people's options are with dog training including Rally-O, competitive Obedience and CGC. YouTube videos were suggested as a great way to promote what we do and show that obedience is fun.
- Use on-line resources that are currently available (such as www.dogstardaily.com (Ian Dunbar))
- Sharing of resources between clubs (such as domestic training syllabuses or other good ideas).

Training Programme Ideas:

The idea of introducing an accredited training scheme for dog trainers was discussed further:

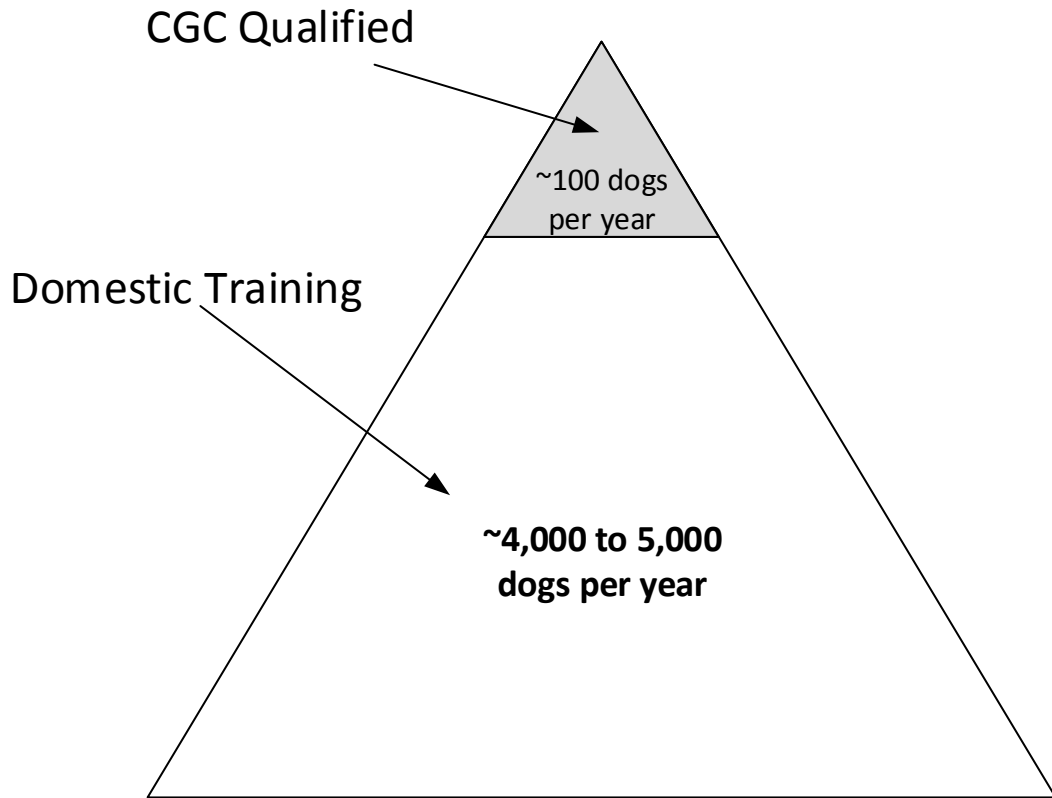
- This could possibly be split into several levels (perhaps analogous to rugby coaching at School, Senior, Provincial, Super Rugby and International levels)
- Levels or areas of expertise might be:
 - Puppies
 - Beginner domestic dogs
 - Advanced domestic dogs
 - Canine Good Citizen
 - Problem or dangerous dogs (behavioural issues)
 - Introductory obedience or Rally-O
 - Top-level obedience or Rally-O
- The level of experience of the trainer necessary for the above areas are not necessarily in the same order. It could be argued that puppies or beginner domestic dogs need a trainer with a higher level of skill and experience than one training more advanced domestic dogs as getting things right in the early stages of a dogs training is critical
- Some key words that came up relating to what an accredited trainers scheme might involve or provide were:
 - Unit standards
 - Recognition
 - Motivation
 - Seminars
 - Videos
 - Literature
 - Mentors
 - Experience

Promotion of NZKC Dog Training to Councils etc. and CGC branding:

Peter discussed how the politicians and others who can have a large influence on what we do with our dogs have very little perception of the good things that the NZKC and its member clubs do in providing dog training for the public. The Canine Good Citizen programme is a great vehicle for promoting what we do but the numbers going for assessment are quite low (given that we have just had the 1000th CGC-qualified dog last year after 10 years (so only averaging 100 dogs per year nationwide)).

Peter floated the idea of bringing all domestic dog training under the Canine Good Citizen umbrella. It is estimated that NZKC clubs train something like 4,000 to 5,000 dogs each year in domestic classes. These classes form the basis for the CGC training programme and many clubs incorporate specific CGC material into their domestic classes already. The domestic classes could be seen providing the fundamentals required to progress to CGC assessments and qualifications but people can choose whether or not that want to go to that next level. By extending the CGC umbrella to cover domestic training we would be in a better position to get higher recognition for the scheme and therefore to attract sponsorship and support from councils for providing benefits to those with CGC qualifications (such as reduced fees or other benefits).

The extension of the CGC brand to apply to all domestic dog training was illustrated by Peter as a pyramid as shown below:



Those present were generally supportive of the idea of encompassing all dog training under the CGC umbrella but would perhaps want to know a bit more about what this would mean in practice.

Geoff Collins
Chairperson
Dog Obedience Committee