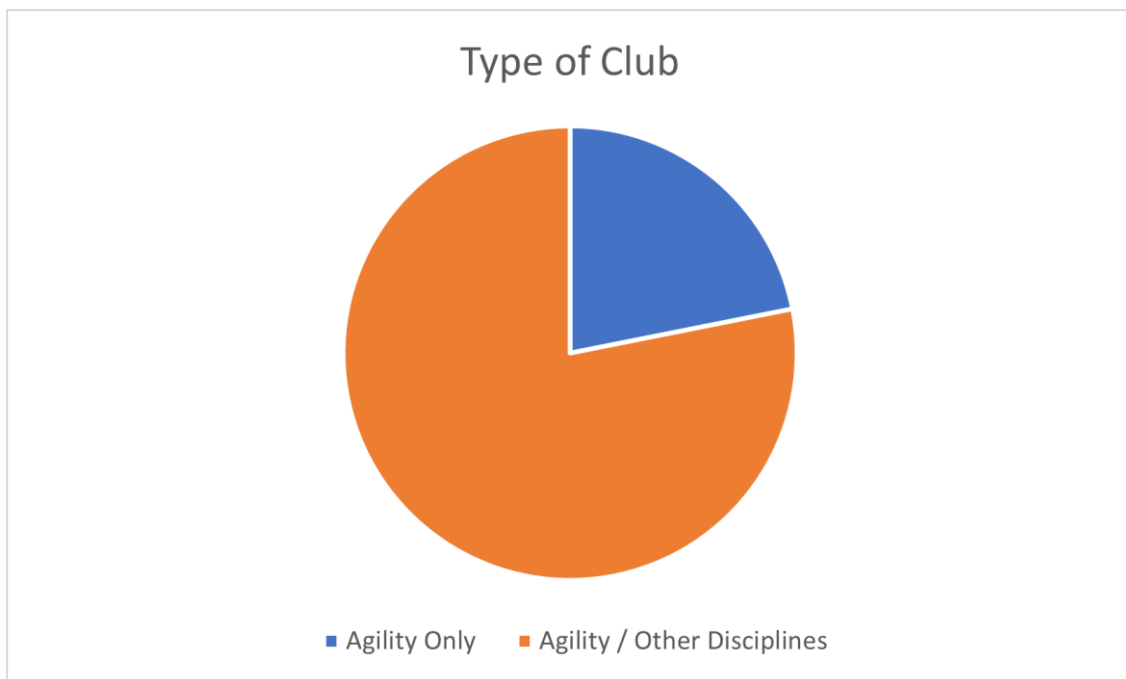


The 43 clubs who are Registered Agility Societies were recently invited to take part in a survey about club membership, training and shows. At the time of writing, we have received 32 responses (the survey is still accepting responses). The data below relates to the 32 responses received so far.

The first questions were demographic, asking about club structure, membership numbers and the types of training on offer. Then we asked a series of open questions about the challenges clubs were facing and also what they felt they did well.

Seven of the 32 clubs identified as being “Agility Only” clubs, with the remainder being multi-discipline clubs.



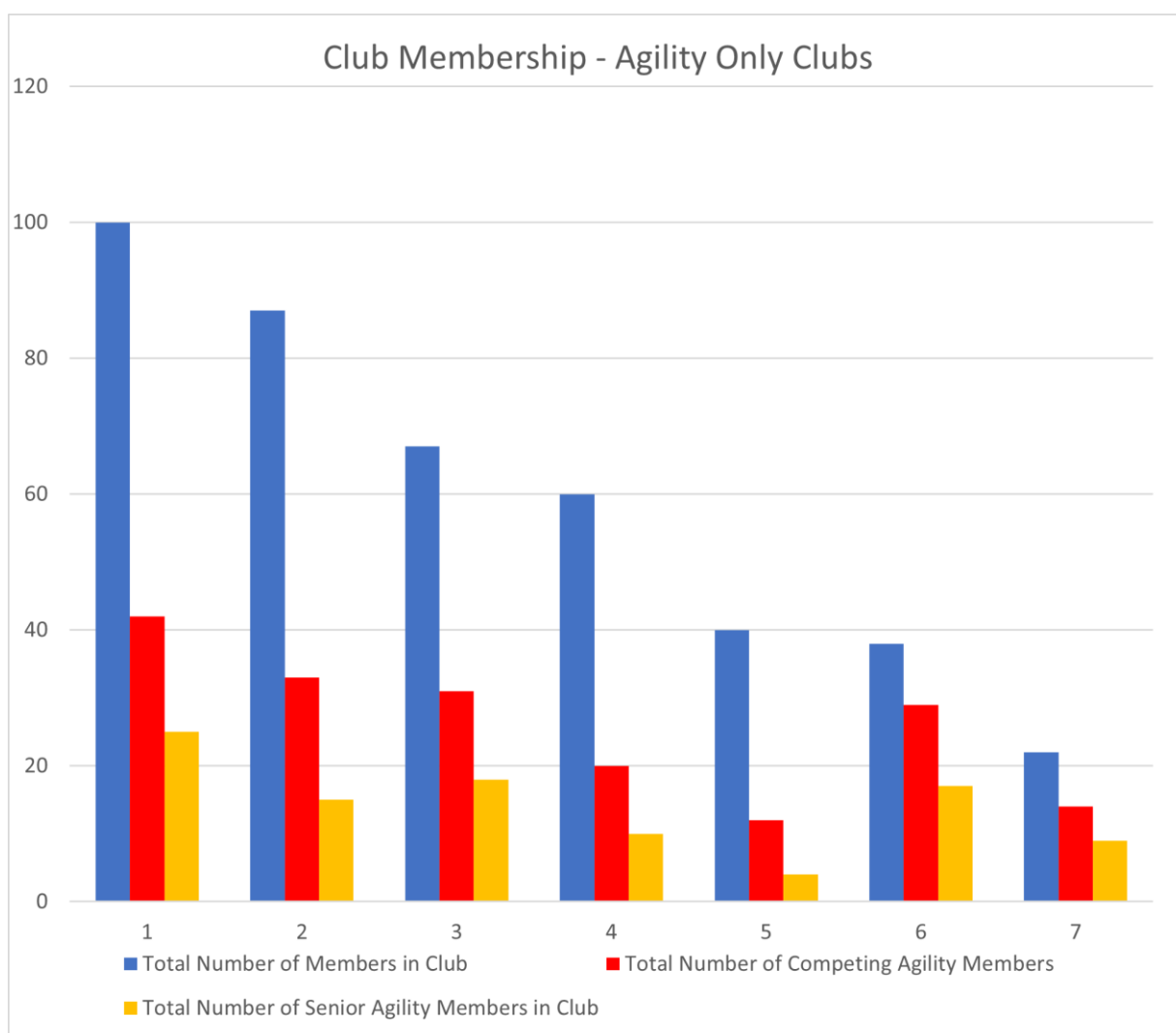
Overall, approximately 42% of multi-discipline club members participate in Agility. The clubs identified approximately 24% of their total members as being “Competing Agility Members” and 10% of their total membership as being “Senior Agility Members”. “Senior Agility Members” was defined as “both members currently competing in Senior and/or Jumpers A and those who are experienced long-time competitors”.

As a proportion of those members who participate in Agility, multi-discipline club identified approximately 57% as “Competing” and 23% as “Senior”

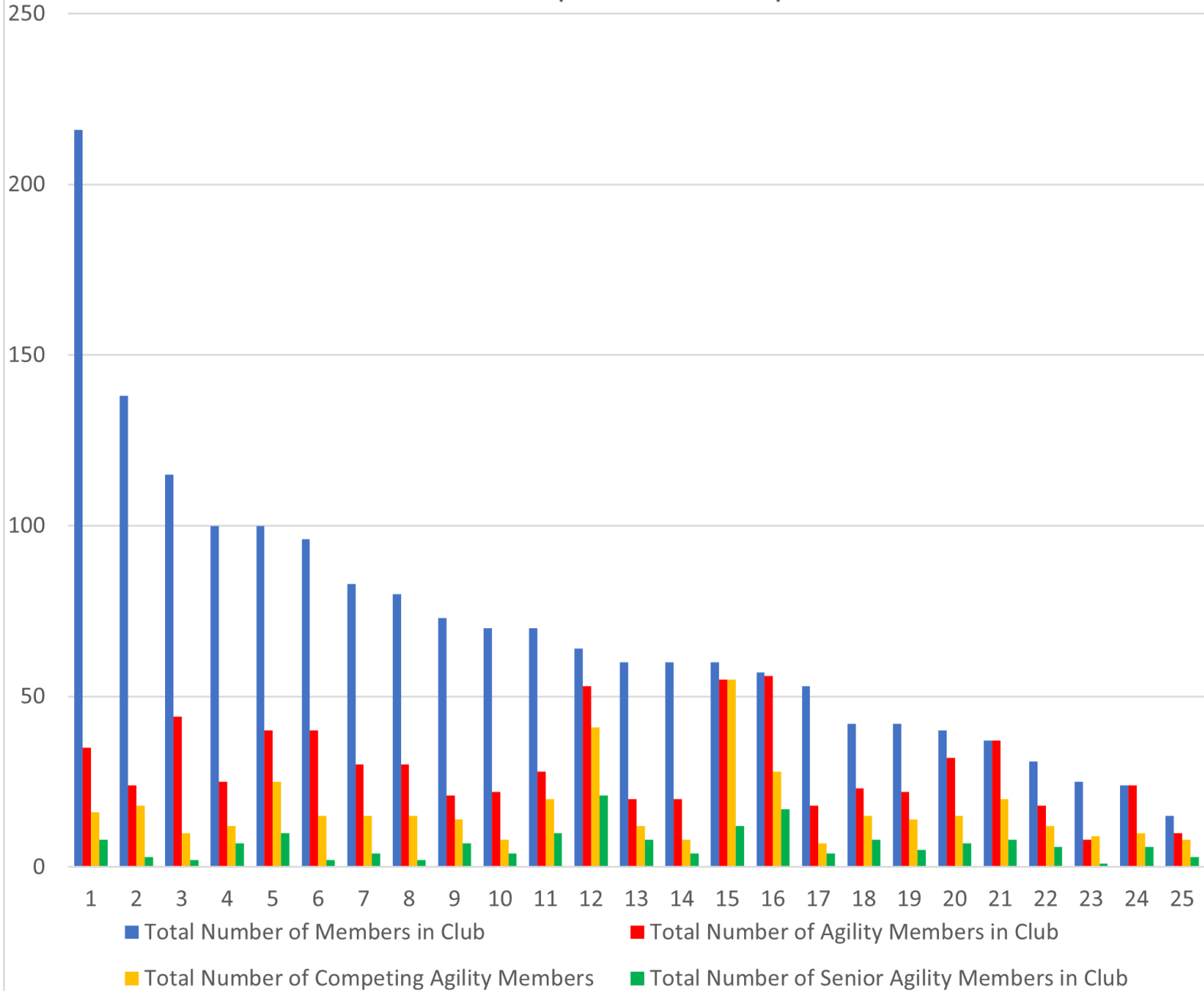
For the agility-only clubs, they identified approximately 64% of their members as being “Competing Agility Members” and approximately 41% of their total membership as being “Senior Agility Members”

## Club Membership:

	Multi-discipline Clubs			Agility Only Clubs		
	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average
Total Membership	216	15	70	100	22	59
Number of Agility Members	56	8	29	90	22	58
Competing Agility Members	28	9	17	42	14	26
Senior Agility Members	21	1	7	25	4	14



# Club Membership - Multi-Discipline Clubs



## Training:

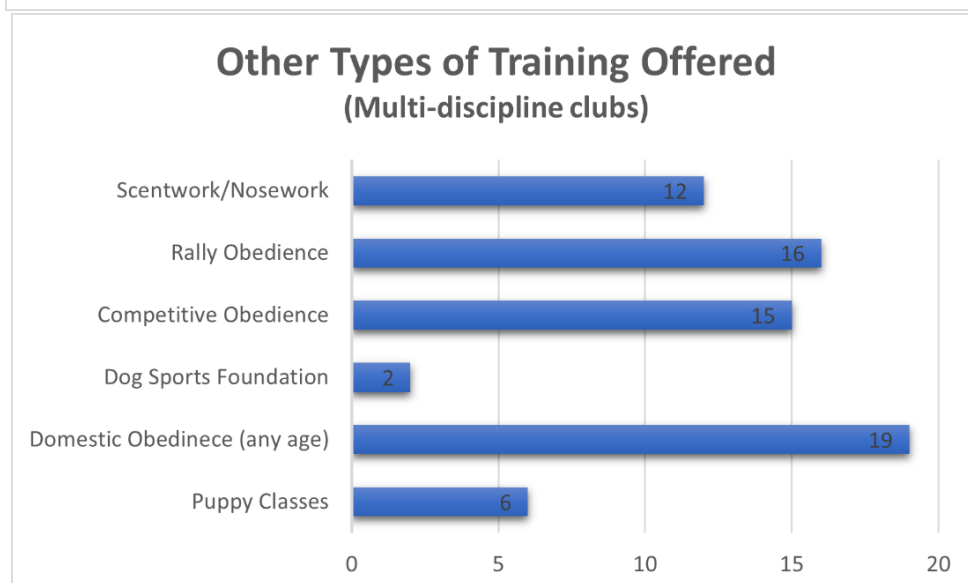
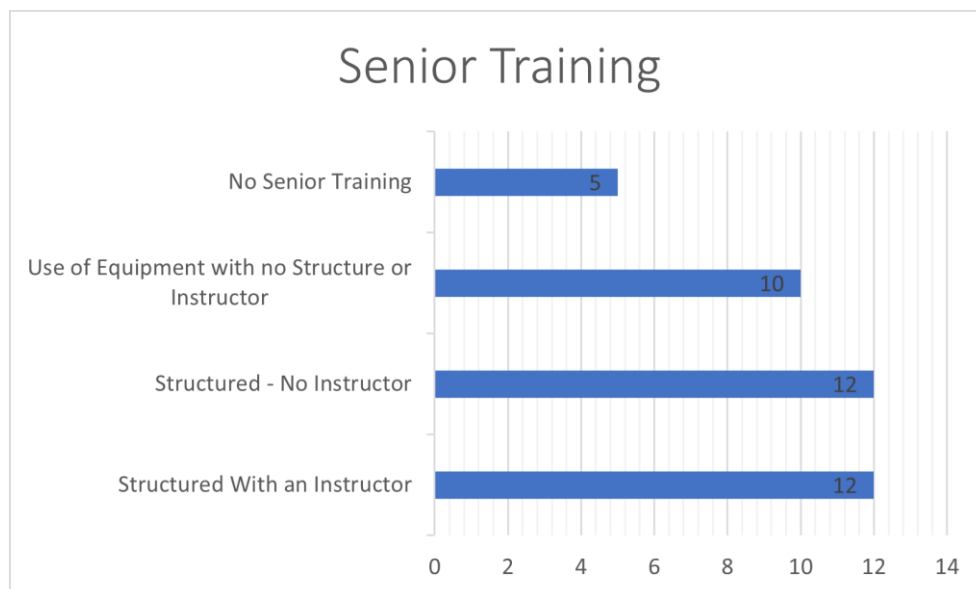
With regards to training, all the respondent clubs offer some sort of beginners agility training and Novice/Intermediate level competitors training. All but one club offers Starters level competitor training.

We drilled down a little more on Senior agility training as we felt that this was an area that clubs struggle with (and this was supported by responses to the questions posed later in the survey). The graph below shows the type of Senior training offered by the clubs. Some clubs offered different options for Senior training which is why the numbers don't add up to 32.

Training was mentioned often when we asked clubs about challenges they had/were/anticipate experiencing. Recruitment and retention of instructors and lack of training structure and resources were all common themes. Several clubs mentioned that they had plenty of interest in their training classes but lacked the instructors to take advantage of that interest.

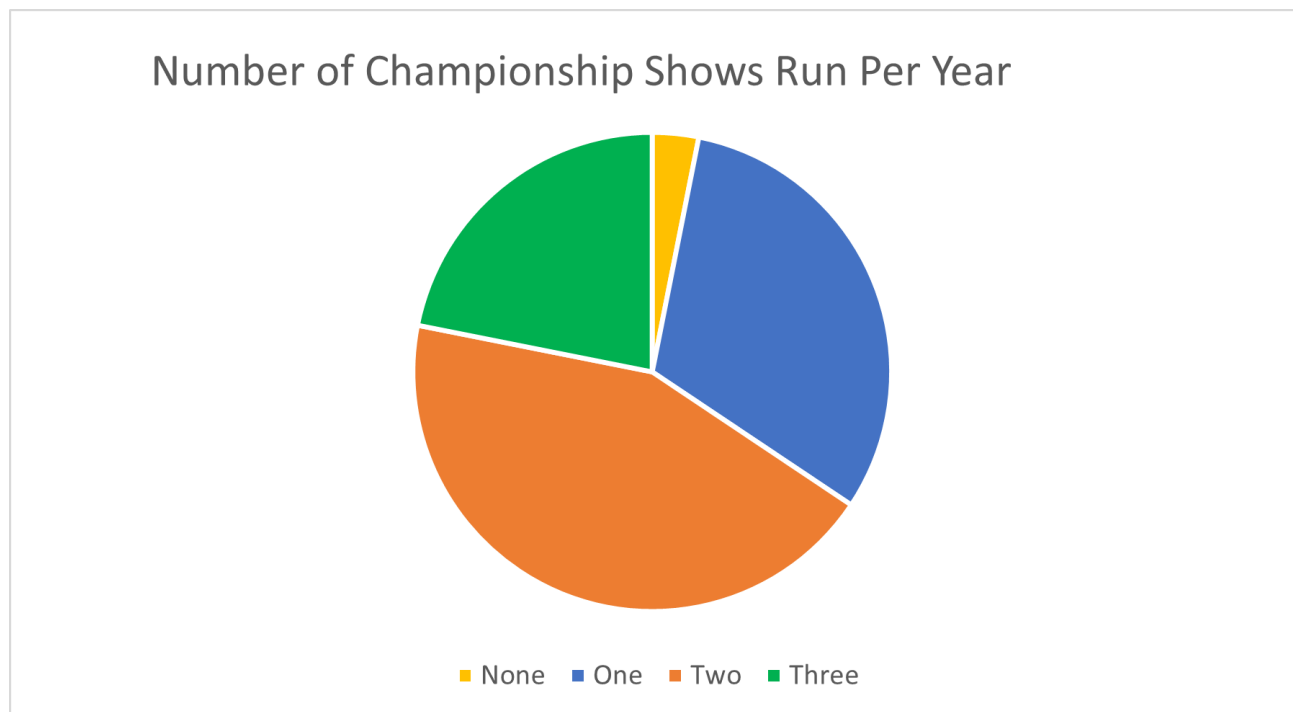
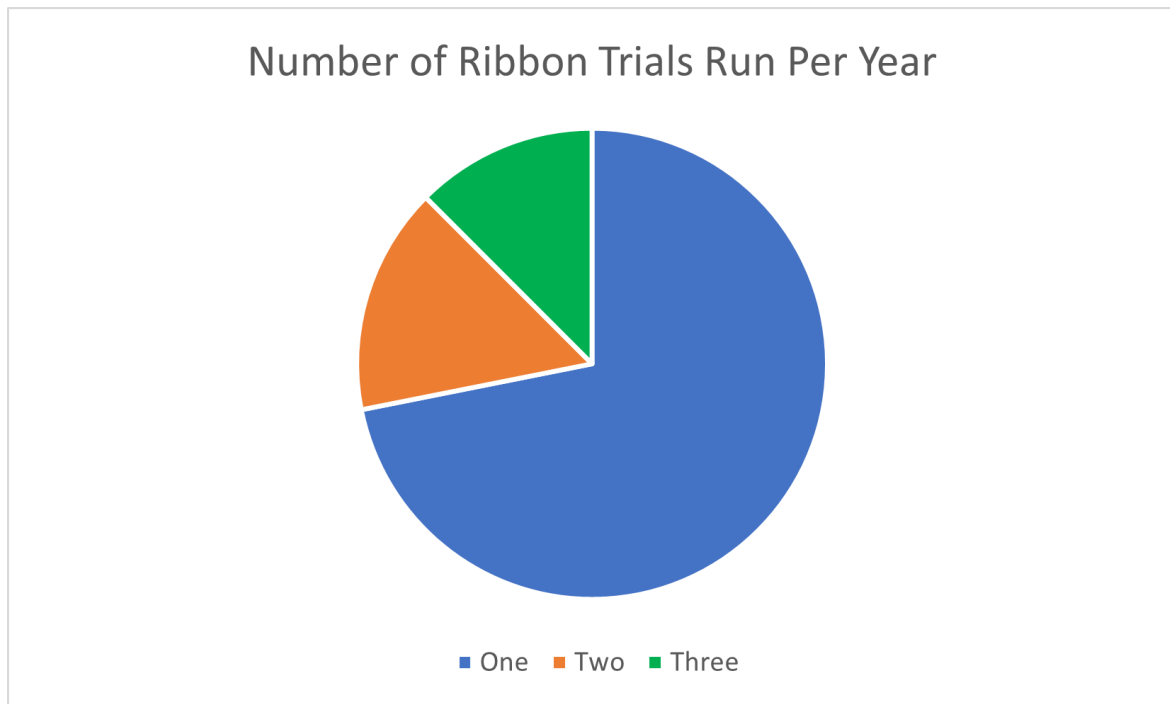
In the multi-discipline clubs there was a wide variety of other training offered.

In the later sections of the survey there were multiple comments about the difficulties related to the provision of training for Senior handlers. Clubs also wanted more training resources and support for training generally.



## Shows:

We also asked clubs how many ribbon trials and championship shows they run per year. The results are graphed below. Interestingly, there was no correlation between membership numbers and the number of shows a club runs. Some of the clubs with the smallest memberships run the most shows.



## What challenges has your club faced over the past 2 years:

The most common challenges reported by the clubs include dwindling membership, lack of trainers, high equipment costs, difficulty finding judges, loss of access to club location, parking issues, and limited availability of grounds for training and holding shows.

COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions also had a significant impact on the clubs, leading to cancelled shows, training disruptions, and increased pressure on trainers and committees to manage safe training protocols.

Other challenges include the need to constantly fundraise to keep up with gear changes and maintenance, difficulty accessing equipment due to venue issues, and constant equipment changes due to new regulations. There were also issues with committee members and instructors' recruitment and retention, with many members not willing or able to take on these roles.

## What challenges is your club CURRENTLY facing?

The main challenges currently faced by the clubs include:

- Lack of instructors and trainers, which leads to overworking of current trainers and burnout
- High costs of running the club, including expenses related to equipment, insurance, and maintenance
- Difficulty in finding and retaining members and volunteers
- Geographical limitations and lack of resources
- Issues with equipment, grounds, and facilities
- Competition from other clubs and events
- Council regulations and limited support
- Need for updates and improvements to equipment and training materials

Overall, agility clubs face a variety of challenges, including financial, organizational, and logistical issues. They also struggle with finding and retaining trainers, dealing with changes in regulations, and maintaining equipment and facilities. These challenges can make it difficult for the clubs to provide quality training and competitions, attract and retain members, and maintain a positive and supportive environment for agility enthusiasts.

## What challenges do you see your club facing in the NEXT 2 years?

People issues were highlighted in responses to this question, including promoting leadership within the club, gaining new members and encouraging members to compete and participate in instructing classes. There were comments about the overreliance on a small number of people, taking care not to overuse the generosity of core members, and the potential for fatigue.

Issues around running shows included running shows at a loss, dealing with severe weather events and finding judges.

Other issues were access to grounds for training, finding trainers for intermediate and senior members, addressing scheduling conflicts due to multiple disciplines, improving organisation and direction, improving gear storage and transport, and increasing club income.

## **What areas do you think your club excels in?**

It was great to see positive feedback on this question. Responses included basic obedience training, winter training, flexibility and adaptability of instructors, efficient show management, good communication with new members, positive club culture, maintenance of equipment, oversubscribed domestic training classes, agility training, support to club members, welcoming new sports for dogs, sharing training resources with other clubs, inclusion, open access to training equipment, collaborative and united committee, celebration of success, membership, Facebook page, introduction of a code of conduct, offering of club-based seminars, training exemplars, prioritising positive relationships between handlers and dogs, and all club members, rebranding, offering Link, and having a broad range of classes on offer.

Clubs also reported that they manage to put on good shows, run seminars and events to gain exposure to current developments in dog sports, and take on new challenges efficiently despite being some of them being very small in size. Some clubs rely on a small number of people for specific areas, such as show management, agility training, and domestic training, but manage to achieve a lot nonetheless.

## **What initiatives (if any) has your club put in place that have helped you to attract more competitors to your shows?**

Initiatives implemented by different clubs to attract more competitors to their shows vary, but some of the most common ones include running efficient shows, having good sponsorship and prizes, offering unique and fun events, promoting a positive atmosphere, nurturing potential, hiring unique locations with great grounds, offering variety in non-competition events, and adding new events.

Other initiatives include using social media platforms to promote the shows, providing good catering, offering excellent coffee and food vendors, having good footing for competitors and dogs, and rewarding attendees with consistent cash prizes.

Some clubs struggle to attract competitors because of their location, and adverse weather conditions that make it hard for competitors to travel. Some clubs do not need more competitors because of the limited space available.

## **What initiatives (if any) has your club put in place that have helped you to attract more people to your training classes?**

Different clubs have implemented various initiatives to attract more people to their training classes. Some clubs have had muster days, have-a-go-days, demonstrations and displays at events such as A&P shows. Word of mouth, flyers, newspaper write-ups and posters in vets and pet shops are also effective for attracting more people.

Social media presence is also important, and some clubs have appointed a social media manager to post on Facebook and Instagram, which helps them advertise. Advertising classes through Facebook pages and having online enrolments are also effective.

Some clubs conduct regular post-course surveys and take on board the feedback to better meet the needs of the course attendees. Some clubs require all members to help out at their shows, which gives them an insight into competitions and then want to train to be able to do that.

Interestingly, some clubs have too many people wanting to join, but not enough space to cater to them.

Having enough instructors to offer a range of classes, installation of lighting to allow later evening training, and having a good reputation also help attract people to training classes.

## **What initiatives (if any) has your club put in place that have helped you retain more people from your beginner/domestic training classes and encourage them to do further training with your club?**

Some of the initiatives include offering a pathway from beginner obedience through to foundation agility, clear information on transition through the classes, being organised, friendly and welcoming, having a progression of classes for people to continue on with regardless of the age of their dogs, a good dog basics class, new classes that meet the needs of new members, encouraging them to enter ribbon trials, end of year fun days and club days, support and encouragement from instructors to take the step to the next level, catering to everyone with training, holding mock competitions and demonstrations, suggesting further classes and offering membership discounts, having a wide range of codes, low ratios in foundation classes, clear progression of skills, and certificates for graduation from classes.