



Kiwi Dog Agility

Sharky's Diary – Chapter Nine

Life is wonderful!

I have been having such a lot of fun with Sharky over the last few weeks. He is a joy to train - very motivated, great focus on me, and uses his brain to think about what he is being taught. I have never spent as much time with a pup/young dog training foundation behaviours as I have with Sharky - writing this diary has been a huge incentive to be sure that I practise what I preach! – and I don't think I quite expected to have the amazing tool to train that I have ended up with. You often hear people say that someone is lucky to have such a great dog, or have done a tricky sequence in agility really well. It really is true that the more I train, the luckier I get.

This week I have had such a breakthrough on my lowered a-frame. One day Sharky was going thru the motions of what I have been training ie put him on from the side, hold his collar and release to a quick 2 on 2 off behaviour with a nose bob. I would reward for multiple nose touches on his target, move away, move back again to reward for more nose touches, and then release to his toy. His nose touches were getting a bit slow - even with me being very enthusiastic. All he wanted to do was to be able to release to his toy for tug. For him, this is the supremely motivating behaviour, and when released he charges at me flat tack to get his toy. Sometimes he is going so fast that I let the toy go rather than him come to such a quick stop.

Anyway, I thought that night I should not do work with toy anymore, cos his mind was not on what it should be and I wanted him to concentrate more on the target and the multiple nose touches. The next day I changed my mind, so did his a-frame with no target or food, just releasing him as soon as he drove into his nose touch. His reaction was "why didn't you tell me before that was what you wanted!". And in the 2 days since then we have moved on in leaps and bounds. He is now running the full length of the lowered full A-frame with lovely drive into 2o2o nose touch no matter where I am, ie in front, behind or beside. He does not do multi nose touches, just holds it until my release. So much easier to train - no need for food, target, or moving back to him all the time - just great! I think all the foundation work I have done has enabled me to get to this point, and I'm happy with a held nose touch rather than multiple touches.

I think it is important while training a dog to make sure that you train to their strengths rather than by some agreed formula. It can be great to ask people you know for their advice about whether your dog is understanding what you are asking him to do. A word of warning though - don't ask 5 different people their opinions, and start training 5 different ways, all you will do is confuse your dog, and frustrate yourself. Pick someone whose opinion you respect and trust to give you information that is relevant to your dog. In my example above with the a-frame, I have slightly deviated from my expected trained behaviour, but I am just as comfortable about what is being offered ie the held nose touch, because it attains the same objective, and Sharky appears to understand it so well.

On a couple of occasions lately I have realised just how well I have taught Sharky his release command - "tack". When he was in position on the end of the a-frame, and I said "K" and moved forward. He moved forward a bit, and then got back on the a-frame. I wondered what on earth he was doing, then realised of course that "K" is Cannon's release command - duh! I think that if I truly thought that he should have released, then my body language etc should have been supporting that command. For him not to release must mean that the word "tack" has a huge amount of meaning for him. I'm going to keep my fingers crossed that I remember which dog I am running and what their release

command is! Of course seeing as I haven't trained Cannon nearly as well, he would probably release on "tack" anyway though hopefully I would notice it.

Sharky is now 14 months old, and like any dog of that age he has a huge amount of energy. I am working long hours at present, so am dragging myself out of bed at some unearthly hour to ensure the dogs have a walk in the morning. When I get home I am often not feeling like an extended training session, so have specific things that I get Sharky to do while I am relaxing in my arm chair:

- Sit - expect instant sit, and not to move until I say "tack" - sometimes throw toy somewhere in the room and he does not move until released
- Down - as for the sit
- Bow - as for the sit
- Beep beep - go backwards until can't go any further and wait there until I throw toy (great for teaching him to catch a ball)
- Left - spin to the left
- Right - spin to the right
- Combinations of more than 1 left and right

Sharky loves that game, and would play for as long as I wanted. I generally play this with whatever toy is handy – often a stuffed toy. He does have to use his brain for this game as I do not reward any anticipation. He has to wait until I say a command before he does something. Initially he found it hard to differentiate between the down, bow, and beep beep, but seems to have that sussed now. It is amazing how tired dogs can get when playing games that use their brains.

I have just started doing some weave training with Sharky and will report on progress next month.

Have fun until then

Fiona Ferrar

WAG's Sister Club

Agility in New Zealand has seen increased interaction with other countries in recent times. We have had a group of our members compete in Australia, and there is now a reciprocal agreement in place for agility competition between New Zealand and Australia.

Recently while surfing the net, I discovered a site for an agility club in the United States that was using the same "WAG" acronym that Waikato Agility Group have.

After some investigation, a "sister club" link was agreed to between the two clubs.

America's WAG is short for Wisconsin-Illinois Agility Group, due to the club being located on the Wisconsin-Illinois border, about an hour North-West of Chicago, and is registered to run United Kennel Club and American Kennel Club trials.

The club was established in 1999, so is a relatively new club, much like Waikato Agility Group.

The club operates out of an indoor facility with a 7000 sq foot working area (2133.6m sq), and have training 4 nights a week.

The two clubs have agreed to provide regular updates and information about each other. We look to provide each other with club information, members profiles, and to provide a run-down on how agility systems work in our countries.

Waikato Agility Group have established this link in the hope of being able to learn more about agility on a global scale. The opportunity to

have regular interaction with an overseas club is an exiting one, and one we hope will lead to an increase in knowledge for both clubs. There are many differences in American agility, and we hope that what both clubs learn will be enlightening.

To learn more, see Wisconsin-Illinois Agility Group's website: <http://www.wagagility.com/>

Nick Chester 🐾

Judges Profile - David Cook

Name: David Cook

Club: Taieri Canine Training Club

Names of dogs and their achievements: I started training/competing in 2001 with my two German short-haired pointers, Lidy and Meja. Over the last seven years I've accumulated two Border collies (Jody and Jax) and more recently a heading dog (Zee) who's 11 months old.

Lidy was a real learning curve dog; with her only accomplishments being winning into senior, and a novice win at the 2001 Christchurch NDTA. Meja and Jax are both Agility Grand Champions, Meja unfortunately having an early retirement due to a hunting accident - where WERE my priorities?! (Don't worry, there wasn't a show on that weekend!).

Jody .. is just Jody! Almost an Agility Champion...but her training and my effort into her has always taken a back burner for sake of the other dogs.

As for Zee, she's learning the basics. I may even teach her a right hand weave? But lets not get too crazy.

My partner Anne also has three dogs in the household (we have seven indoor doggies if you're wondering). Pete and Kay-j are also Agility Grand Champions, and Cole the Labrador, does retired Labrador things!

What made you decide to become a judge?: Two things really. Spare time being one. If you're at a show and you're only in two grades (as myself and Anne both are) you have a lot of down time. When I thought I'd like to give it a try (with some persuasion from another judge) having another young dog of my own starting out again seemed a LONG way off. This period of time is really looking like only one and a half to two years, but never to mind.

The second reason would be to experience agility from the judge's view. It's easy to criticise from the sideline or crossing the finish line when a call hasn't gone your way or wasn't called the way you think it should have been.

Judges are volunteers and like competitors, make mistakes. Time, effort and thought goes into designing courses, let alone standing in the middle judging them, which can be in the rain...wind...scorching sun (although we don't get that down south) or whatever. It also impedes on running your own dogs, which is a sacrifice you have to be willing to take to accommodate the lovely club that has invited you to judge for them.

What good advice were you given when doing your judges training?: Probably to design something that is judgable. i.e. can you see the contacts clearly and judge the whole course without doing 200 metres worth of walking following each dog/handler.

And to design something that flows and above all is safe for the dog.

What's the most enjoyable aspect about judging?: When people come up to me after their run and say that they enjoyed the course, wether they went clear or not. Also Rose Locks lunches when you judge at O.C.T.C! Which many judges would agree on!

Any drawbacks of judging that people might not be aware of?: Sacrificing your own runs, even when you still get to run. Can be hard to do your dogs justice if you have a large work load (personally anyway). Being rushed from the ring to sign certificates, to walking a course to sitting down for lunch. Can be a tad hectic.

What's your favourite level of competition to judge, and why?: Since I'm only on the junior panel (and happily) Champ show intermediates

are as high as I've judged. It would be a tie between intermediate, because I'm judging all the people I compete against, and AD/ADX's because they mean a lot to people and you can sense the nerves in the air! People are often so thrilled when they go clear in them, which is nice to see.

Any particular handling techniques that would help handlers out on your courses?: Front crosses!!!! I try not to design anything that's suited to my particular handling style, but there's always room for front crosses!

Which piece of agility equipment is the toughest to judge? Handlers can run in completely different paths, so it's easy to be obstructed when looking for a contact or weave entry etc when 20 people have been in one spot then someone throws you completely and runs another! So I have no one piece of equipment I like or dislike to judge.

Which do you like most? Designing a course, or judging it? It really depends. When people run it the way you intended it to be run, I like judging them. When few or no one does, I prefer the design phase. I'd rather give out 100% clear rounds and have to sign a heap of certificates than get only a handful of clears, and feel perhaps the course wasn't achievable.

Which is the hardest to judge in, really hot, really cold, or really wet weather?: HOT! It's so foreign to us southerners. The horrible glare in your eyes, the dry throat, sweating in a dress shirt and pants. At least in the rain you can wear whatever you like under your big jacket and waterproof pants!

Any advice to any prospective judges out there? Ask current judges at your club or at a show if you're interested. Judge a maiden at a ribbon trial. If you decide to go on from there, onto the panel, great. If you don't want to judge a show, you don't have to. If you don't think it's right for you when you're on the panel, you don't have to stay.

At the end of the day, at least you can get a free judges badge to pin your dogs competition number on! 🐾

Letter of Thanks and Appreciation, from Barry Monaghan.



I can imagine some of the comments made in regard to my latest "Cardiac Arrest" incident at Gisborne, on Saturday 31st May, Gosh He's done it again, what a way to get some attention etc, he should leave Agility alone at his age, some people never learn!!

It is hard to find appropriate words to express my thanks and gratitude to all involved in coming to my aid that day, in particular, Fiona Hodgson, Debbie Middlemiss, whose response was immediate, and kept me stabilised until paramedics arrived, my apologies to Robin Fargher for having the course interrupted and disassembled.

I certainly had my share of variety in Life Flight's Air Ambulance, from Gisborne to Wellington from there to Auckland, for an implant procedure, then back to Hutt Hospital to recover, then being discharged on Saturday, in time to be home for the Rugby Test, I have had a visit today, Wednesday, 18th June from a Cardiac Nurse to monitor my condition, and I apparently came through with "Flying Colours"

Some Special mention needs to be made, for those who contributed toward cost of petrol for Fiona to drive my dogs back to Wellington, preferring to do that than to fly back home.

To Maria Noa Noa who looked after my dogs in the meantime, To Norm Claude & Donna Scragg for keeping the "Dog World" advised as to my progress, there may also be some I have overlooked, if so please accept my heartfelt thanks, plus the Flowers received, then the mountain of cards with so many words of encouragement

I feel so humble to have had so much support from Family and Friends alike, and I am so proud to be part of such a wonderful "Hobby". I look forward to being out and about, and even competing again soon.

My Best Wishes and Thanks to all. Barry Monaghan. 🐾