

Agility

Buy Buy Buy Equipment for Performance Dogs

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Hybrid Training

<http://hybriddogtrainign.blogspot.com/>

Recently in New Zealand there has been robust discussion on agility obstacles, and the safety of these pieces of equipment. As a community, it is fantastic to see more focus on injury prevention. But there are lots of other things that more recently with international shipping are becoming available to performance handlers. So what is worth the money, and what is not? It's very hard to find strong evidence for many pieces of equipment, as the industry as a whole isn't big enough to fund extensive research.

In my mind there are three things I consider when looking at agility-related training equipment.

1. Is there reliable science behind the product? Has effectiveness been tested, is quality controlled, and are there any adverse possible effects?
2. Are there experts that you trust, who recommend the product?
3. Are there other consumers that you trust, who recommend the product? What do your agility buddies think? In the lack of science, then the next best thing is anecdotal evidence.

Basics

Don't forget the essentials for any dog competitor – the basics of first aid. For agility dogs consider including vet wrap (you can never have too much!), a muzzle, something to ice and/or put heat on injuries or tight muscles, wound wrapping materials, saline solution, antihistamines, Traumeel, scissors, and nail clippers. Safe



containment of dogs both at home, and away is also an essential item. Crates and pen are worth the money, and you will always get use from them.

Nails

All canine athletes should maintain short nails, and trim excessive hair around pads. This reduces the chance of slipping that may cause injury. Any sharp scissors work for hair trimming, I use cheap stationary scissors. However, the more expensive hair specific scissors will last longer. The scissor style nail clippers are much easier to use, and pose less risk to hitting the quick than the guillotine style nail clippers. The cheaper ones work fine, but may not last as long as more expensive styles. The gold standard are the Millers Forge nail clippers. If you really want to get serious about nails then you have to 'Dremel'. This is a small hand held rotary tool that sands down the nail. Be sure to avoid the cheap versions like the Pedipaws, as these are loud, vibrate, and are ineffective.

https://www.bunnings.co.nz/dremel-micro-rotary-tool-8v_p00305850

<http://millersforge.com/millers-forge-nail-trimmers-files.html>

Supplements

Supplements are tricky. There is good research about many individual components, but not as much about complete supplement products. The research regarding fish oil seems to be pretty strong and is useful in addition to other products in assisting joint health. I think supporting New Zealand based products is great where possible; Newflands fish oil, and Provida 3MEGA are some good examples.

Other joint supplements popular within the New Zealand agility community are products such as Bomazeal, 4CYTE, Nutravet, and

Mybeau. My advice is to find someone you trust that recommends a glucosamine and chondroitin-based product, and trial it for at least a month. Keep in mind that many products such as these can be variable in their effect on individual dogs.

<http://veterinarymedicine.dvm360.com/joint-supplements-dogs-helpful-vs-hype>

<http://www.provet.co.nz/en-au/products/exclusiveproducts/4cytecanine.aspx>

https://www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/top-5-therapeutic-uses-omega-3-fatty-acids?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Clinician%27s+Brief+Newsletter&utm_campaign=Online+170925&ajs_uid=267213296356A5W

<http://www.fourflax.co.nz/shop/Shop+Online/vitality-wellbeing/3mega-2.html>

<http://newflands.co.nz/>

Magnetic and light based therapy.

Again, like supplements, the science on these items can be limited, and often not specific to dogs. Also there are substantial differences between individual products. It's important to take recommendation on specific products by your dog's healthcare professional to ensure that you get the product most useful to your dog's needs. These can be used both for treatment of injuries, but also in general to aid recovery from intense physical activity.

- PEMF products pulse magnetic fields, which help increase the cellular movement of ions. This in turn helps with pain, inflammation, and healing. PEMF beds are an excellent way of treating a larger area of your dog, but are quite expensive.
- The Assisi loop and the ActiPatch are smaller PEMF devices that allow targeted treatment of specific areas of the body. They are quite cost effective in comparison to a PEMF bed.
- Red light therapy offers similar benefits to PEMF treatment in being able to specifically treat areas of injury, pain or inflammation. The added benefit of red light therapy is that it does not have some of the hazardous side effects that incorrect laser use can have. The specific wavelengths of the different red light devices can vary in the depth that this treatment can penetrate.
- Laser therapy offers similar benefits to the above treatments, but generally the wavelengths of the lasers mean that these can penetrate deeper than other treatment options. However incorrect laser use is not without risk, so it is a good idea to get your animal physio to treat in conjunction with regular treatment.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/pulsed-electromagnetic-field-therapy>

<https://respondsystems.com/pemf/canine-products/>

<https://animalorthocare.com/blogs/aoc-blog/study-pemf-treatment-benefits-dogs-with-joint-pain>

<https://assisianimalhealth.com/>

<http://www.actipatch.com/>

<https://joovv.com/blogs/joovv-blog/surprising-benefits-red-light-therapy-pets-dogs-cats-horses-animals>

<http://www.akcchf.org/canine-health/your-dogs-health/caring-for-your-dog/laser-therapy-for-dogs.html>

Enrichment and reinforcement

As the owners of high drive dogs we need to ensure that their needs are met. Because these dogs often need a 'job to do', providing enrichment activities is an essential part of maintaining their mental wellbeing. This can be provided with simple resources such as paper

bags, boxes, and cardboard rolls or more commercial toys such as kongs, snuffle mats, snoops, and the many other food toys available.

Reinforcement in training needs to be tailored to the dog's preferences. If a dog is food motivated, then you need to find a food toy that works such as a pocket tug toy, clam, KONG ballistic hide'n treat ball, or lotus ball. For toy motivated dogs you need to consider your dog's preference, ability to throw, and visibility on the ground. In some situations a toy you can ball up in your hand is also useful. The Puller is a good option for those who find that their hands get damaged from teeth, toys from Woofa Wares or 4mymerles with bungy handles are excellent options for tough strong tuggers.

<http://getitdogtoys.co.nz/>

https://www.behaviourvet.co.nz/store/c8/Environmental_Enrichment_and_Toys.html

<https://www.facebook.com/woofa.wares>

<https://www.4mymerles.com/>

<https://www.distripet.co.nz/>

Coats

For many of our urban dogs who routinely sleep inside it's important to consider their temperature regulation. Fleece coats from Mega Bowen are an excellent fit and price, and there are several other more technical coats such as D-Fa and Hurtta that are an excellent fit.

Back on track coats offer a therapeutic coat that has a ceramic component to the fabric, which reflects heat and cover's all joints.

<https://www.facebook.com/Mega-Mobile-Bowtech-216216071768908/>

<http://www.backontrack.co.nz/>

Keeping animals cool in summer

Vehicles can get really warm in our New Zealand summers. We need to ensure that our canine teammates are at a reasonable temperature and not overheating. Options easily available in New Zealand include cool mat's, battery operated fans, and shade cloth.

https://www.bunnings.co.nz/ryobi-one-hybrid-portable-fan-18v-skin-only_p00286772

Fitness gear

Unfortunately in New Zealand canine fitness is a relatively new area, and all the manufacturers of equipment are based overseas. There are human alternatives that will work available from Kmart, the Warehouse, and sporting equipment providers such as Hart Sports. If starting out in fitness work, this equipment is sufficient. However, as you need more technical gear your options do decrease. There is a small amount of FitPaws products available (from physio's and rehabilitation professionals), and Totofit is available from Australia.

<https://www.primalpaws.com/totofit/>

Photos by Simon Tompssett

