

Agility

Hot about Hoopers

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Millie the Australian Shepherd.

Photos supplied by Kiva Dog Training, Perth.

The sport of Hoopers is taking off around the globe and is one of the fastest growing sports in both the UK and Australia. New Zealand now has the opportunity to bring the sport to our shores.

While relatively new to many countries, Hoopers offers opportunities to dogs and handlers from a wide range of backgrounds, from handlers with physical limitations to dogs who need more forward focus and drive. Hoopers is for everyone!

What is Hoopers?

Hoopers isn't about running around at high speed to control the dog. The sport is much more than that, which is what makes it unique.



Otto the Bernese Mountain Dog.

It's a chance for handlers and dogs of all ages to compete together on a level playing field and have a lot of fun. Hoopers requires the dogs to negotiate a course of hoops, barrels and tunnels relatively independently.

The courses range from basic, straight forward loops to challenging with many changes of directions. In Australia there are two types of competition. One is based on distance handling using verbal and directional cues, and with the other the handler can run with the dog, similar to Agility.

It can be fast and furious, or slow and steady, but the main aim is to go clear!

Who can do Hoopers?

Anyone! Hoopers is aimed at handlers of any age and mobility and any breed, large or small, fast or slow.

Hoopers is fantastic for those who are unable to run and they can teach their dogs to drive around the course with very little movement from themselves.

It is suitable for dogs of all ages including young dogs or older retired Agility dogs. due to no jumping or tight turns. If your dog is a big or heavy breed then injuries can occur easily in Agility and Hoopers is a great, safe, low-impact alternative.

The sport is a great way to introduce dogs to safe equipment, and build that forward focus and other skills required for their Agility careers further down the track.

What gear is required?

The gear required for Hoopers is relatively inexpensive for clubs to obtain or for people to set up at home. It features hoops, barrels and tunnels which are shorter but taller than Agility tunnels. The taller tunnels mean more breeds, such as the Bernese Mountain Dog, have the opportunity to do the sport.

While the tunnels are the only thing that could be prohibitive for new trainers or clubs, there are 'get-arounds' by customizing hoops into tunnels so the initial outlay to clubs isn't huge.

Does it take much to train?

Training requires you to work methodically on your communication with your dogs and holding their attention. Six weeks of training can have a dog and handler confident enough to run a short course. This can be quicker with an experienced sporting dog. Agility foundations and Hoopers foundations are very similar using front/blind/rear crosses and post turns.

Why Hoopers?

Hoopers creates a great connection with your dogs and develops distance handling skills, verbal commands, confidence and independence which so many dogs struggle with. It will bridge the gap between foundation Agility and when they can't begin competing in Agility quite yet due to being too young. The sport is good for those retired dogs that still need a job to do but with the physical demands of Agility putting them at risk of not retiring soundly. It can also be used to build physical fitness and be added to a rehabilitation programme.

Hoopers is a fun alternative to Agility training for some low-impact exercise for dogs. If you really want that pure adventure dog but don't want to risk their limbs when you are training them, then add Hoopers to your training program and build up from there! 🐾

Heather Hood



Border Collie X Zen.



Bentley the Shih Tzu.

Did You Know?

You can find your AC Messages here:
www.dogagility.org.nz/index.html

Ad/Filler