



KiwiDogAgility

Diary of an Agility Event Secretary

If you aren't scared of computers, you don't seek the limelight and can work to deadlines without stressing then the Agility Event Secretary job could be the one for you.

It is a job that starts well before the competition. You need to check your letterbox every day because you will get lots of mail!! You can either store the envelopes up until the closing date for the event, or open them and input the details as they arrive. Opening up the envelopes can be an interesting task, with people forgetting to include their money, or not adding up correctly. With computerised forms the illegible forms are almost a thing of the past!! At this stage you need to update the database by adding new titles to a dog's name, a different handler if required and checking that the details on the form are actually correct. There have been a few occasions when the permanent agility number of the dog has been incorrect! So the event secretary often acts as a bit of an amateur sleuth too!!

These days due to the uncertainty of splits entries often close many weeks before the event, so late entries can be a problem. Some Clubs happily accept them (up to a point) but others are tougher, and considering it could mean a late notification of a split, that isn't surprising.

Most computer systems will organise random running orders and some event secretaries will spend extra time helping those with multiple dogs by ensuring they are spread out within a class. As a handler with multiple small dogs, event secretary Robyn Fargher knows how nice it is to have your dog separated for a bit of extra breathing space! Diana McKay deals with some of the biggest events in the country and she has

to contend with 3 or even 4 rings running at the same time! In these cases care needs to be made that similar classes (like Starters/Novice or Novice/Intermediate) aren't running at the same time AND further thought needs to be given to what heights are running at any one time.

Next the Running orders done, the information is transferred to the catalogue. Additions to a catalogue will include the sponsors details and special conditions relating to the Club such as special events to be held, allocation of ribbons and prizes as well as details of the Judges, local Vets and Club officials. This is an opportunity for the arty side of the Event secretary to be exhibited if they wish!! Whilst the catalogue is winging its way via email to be published on the agility website, the event secretary will be printing off and laminating call steward sheets, as well as copies of the judge's courses ready to go and organising scribe sheets. An event secretary needs a good supply of folders and plastic envelopes to make sure everything is sorted, so shopaholics with a desire to shop at Stationery Warehouse may apply!!!

A few days before the event the event secretary will collect together a bunch of other STUFF needed on the weekend - bags for each class, which go inside bigger bags for each ring. It's like a penophile's dream!! Yes that's right - a pen collector's dream!! Bags with biros, pencils, whiteboard markers, and vivid. Lots of sellotape, blutack, and eyebrow pencils (not for the Event secretary's eyes but for the call sheets!! in case it gets wet). Robyn then stores this in her plastic set of drawers in the motorhome ready to go to the competition.

The event secretary in action



But there's more!!!! As well as the stuff for the rings an event secretary needs a computer (and maybe a spare), and at least two printers with spare toner, and all the other bits and pieces that might be required during the event. Yes, you have to be a bit geeky to be an event secretary!!

Event day arrives. Robyn usually arrives on Friday and set up lots of stuff even before the event day dawns. On the first day of an event at 6 am she is already on the grounds, up and walking her dogs, before she carries on with event organisation. She also walks the first courses and gets her dogs ready to run. An event secretary needs to be an organised person!!

Once the day is running it is a matter of getting the results entered as soon as possible. It goes quicker if the event secretary isn't running dogs, or if the data inputting is shared by a few people as DAWG used to do. Food tends to be grabbed on the run during the day. It's handy if you have friends who will help you with your dogs too. Having dogs of the same height in the same classes is useful as you have more time to process the results.

On the whole, once the event starts, things go pretty smoothly, with the odd query about indecipherable writing or dog numbers. When a class is finished the number of clear rounds is checked against the score board, and then the result sheets and the clear rounds are printed. The results will be pinned/taped up somewhere so that competitors may view them (and point out any obvious errors!!) The clear rounds are put aside to be signed by the judge and during the day messages will be sent out to the judges asking them to come in to sign the clear round certificates. It is helpful if the certificates can be signed during the day to relieve pressure at the end of the day. Sometimes Clubs might ask Judges to electronically record their signatures, and this means judges aren't bothered at all!!

If Robyn is running short of time at the end of the day, she will just enter the clear rounds so the certificates can be printed. The rest can be done later. Once the clear rounds are signed by the judge, the certificates with ribbons are put into their bags ready for prize giving. The rest of the certificates are put into the box for competitors to pick up.

Prize giving will normally start while the last of the classes are still being processed. A good event secretary will try to have everything available as quickly as possible after the last class ends as people like to be able to get away promptly at the end of the day. If the Event secretary has a dog in the prize line up results might go out to prize giving in a certain order, leaving a particular class until last so they can get the certificates finished and still receive the ribbon (and smile for the camera!)

Once day one prize giving is finished, it's time to get the bags ready for the next day, and maybe input any faulted rounds that didn't get entered earlier. Eventually it's time for a rest and tea, then normally a relatively early night.

Running an event from a horse float!!

The next day works the same way, but at the end of the day it's TIDY UP TIME!! Everything has to be packed up again - a large box full of all the bits out of the desks that will get sorted and put away later, until the next competition. When Robyn gets home she sends the results off to be published on the website so people at the event, and far away, can look and see how everyone went.

Robyn says the reward for the hard work is knowing that she made a contribution and helped to make the event run well. The events she manages are big enough that you can't afford the time for holdups to happen and good preparation means that things will run smoother.

Karen de Wit

Thanks to Robyn Fargher, Diana McKay for comment and photos, Sandra Mohekey for the horsefloat photo.

QUOTES heard by an agility event secretary.

"Why did my dog D?" - Bear in mind, the event secretary is far away from the ringside...

"Can I have my clear round now, I'd like to go" - when the event is still running...

Seen on an entry form in the section titled "Dog's NZKC #" - I don't know!!!

Another entry form - Best one I ever had was a blank entry form with a signature at the bottom, no person name, no dog name no nothing and cash so no way of telling who it was from.....

For up to date information on NZ Agility go to the website www.dogagility.org.nz

