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Musings of a past AC Member

2024 sees Agility Committee elections coming up and the opportunity for the community to have a say in effectively what the board of directors for the sport of Agility looks like. Having served two terms on the committee, one as chair and one as the Dogs New Zealand Executive Council representative, I wanted to take an opportunity to encourage anyone who is interested in the sport and some of the challenges ahead to think about standing.

Why is this important to me? Elections are healthy. They show that people care enough about the sport to want to be part of creating the future. Having a diverse range of candidates allows different visions to be debated, gives people a say in what they want the future to look like, and, most importantly, allows engagement in a sport we love and want to be successful.

I cannot recall ever being asked why I stood and, more importantly, why I went back for a second time. I stood because I had been a critic of some of the decisions made by past committees and felt if I was in a position to criticise, then I should be prepared to do something about it. I stood because I wanted to make the sport better and felt I could do that. I stood because I wanted to see it grow and felt I could help make that happen. When I look around me at shows I see many people better qualified than me to make this difference but see many walking away from making this commitment.

Whether you agree with decisions or not, the people who stand sacrifice time they would have otherwise been spending with their families, with their own dogs or just generally having a life! This sacrifice gives you a seat at the table creating the future of the sport. When you look back at the changes you get involved in, you can look back with pride on things that have changed and the creation of the sport today.

As an Agility Committee member you get to be part of this, and if you want to help create the platform for the vision for the future this is the time to put your name forward and make sure we have an election.

To provoke a little bit of thought around future challenges that will confront a new committee (and with a bit of luck get people



thinking about the difference they can make a difference in this area and stand!) I'll list a couple that will challenge the sport.

One of the most important to consider is the growth of private training and seminars and the impact this is having on clubs (both good and bad). Disclosing an interest – I attend private seminars and training and I enjoy and get a lot out of it. However with this growth is the gradual drift away from the club to private training. This has had an impact on clubs in the UK and Australia and had a direct impact on people available to run and organise a show, an outcome being we could see the number of shows being offered in New Zealand on the decline. (or clubs folding) Dogs New Zealand rules allow for you to a member of the Waikato Collie Club and still compete in agility without giving anything back to the sport. There is a real challenge in how to best manage this so the sport continues to be able to grow.

The Auckland market is one of the biggest in New Zealand but as a proportion supplies very small numbers competing. It was one of the challenges that I had when I was on committee without a

solution as to how we could grow that market and capture the large number of dog owners in the Auckland area

How do we encourage more people to come through the sport and become judges? We are getting a mix of age ranges in judges and how do we encourage people to give up their own dogs and become officials at shows, standing out in all weathers so we get to enjoy competing

Do we have our class structure right? We have 3 classes of jumpers and 4 of agility. Does this give us an opportunity to change to 3 of each and is it right to structure our shows like this?

There are a number of issues still facing us, and the above is to provoke not only discussion but to provoke you into thinking that I can make a difference and I'm up to the challenge. It does not matter where we sit in the sport we all have something to offer and this year is the opportunity to step up and be part of the change, not the problem!

I am going to finish with a reality check. Not everyone is going to like you or what you are doing. Passionate people will make sure they share their thoughts on whether you have made a good decision or not. I say it's an advantage of me being short that it goes over my head. The key is not to take it personally but move on. That said it's still a great learning experience and a great part of the sport to give something back to and make a difference in your own way

There are a number of past committee or current committee members that would be more than willing to answer any questions you may have, or nominate you so that we do have an election and do have a chance to talk about the things that matter to us as a community. 🐾

Bevan Dale

past Agility Committee member