

Agility: Judges Sub Committee

The Judges Sub Committee (JSC) is the dedicated support team behind New Zealand's dog Agility and Hoopers judges. Operating as a branch of the Dogs NZ Agility Committee, their mission is simple: ensuring judges are heard, supported, and continually evolving in their roles.

What They Do

The JSC is all about advocating for Agility and Hoopers judges, making sure they play a key role in decision-making on Agility and Hoopers judging matters. They provide ongoing guidance, help judges grow in their careers, and work with the Agility Committee to address key issues impacting the judging community.

They also:

- Set trainee judges' exam dates and craft fresh, relevant questions each round.
- Review applications for the judges' panel, offering recommendations on approvals.
- Maintain clear communication between competitors, judges, and the Agility Committee.

Scope & Responsibilities

The JSC ensures judges and competitors have a space to discuss concerns about courses, rulings, and promotions. Their recommendations shape the future of judging in NZ, helping maintain fairness and professionalism within the sport.

Who's Involved?

This seven-member team is made up of Ribbon Trial, Agility, Senior and Hoopers panel judges, all experts in their field. If no Agility Committee (AC) member is among them, the AC appoints a non-voting liaison to keep discussions smooth and transparent. The current members are Joanne Rennell (Chair), Chris Moody, Erin Ball, Karen De Wit, Liz Barlow and Justine Dale with Paul Taylor also being the AC Liaison.

How It Works

- Members serve for two years following elections.
- In line with the AC, half of the committee are up for re-election every year and nominations will be called shortly for the vacant positions.
- If a casual vacancy arises at any other time, the next-highest polling candidate steps in, or the AC may appoint someone if needed.
- Retiring judges can stay in the JSC until the next election cycle.

Meetings & Decision Making

Meetings happen online, with occasional informal in-person meetups at shows. A dedicated Facebook group keeps discussions, votes, and decisions organised, while the AC/JSC liaison ensures information flows efficiently between committees.

What is the current group working on?

- Designing a Hoopers judges process
- Updating judging paths documents and flow charts for all panels
- Criteria and processes for judges wanting to judge overseas
- Seeking opinion on possible changes to weave judging
- Considered various applications from judges
- Considered feedback about judges
- Looking at updating some regulations from a judging point of view

The goal of the JSC is to help the AC in almost any aspect of judging, especially when the AC can potentially be made up of no Agility judges at all. This enables the AC to get assistance from the very people who are doing the work at shows.

I have been on the JSC since its inception, and in that time we have tried to improve the process and training of our judges, and we have (with AC assistance) facilitated an online and in-person judges training session that enabled our judges to learn some new course design and judging techniques. There is a drive currently to look at minimum distances between inline obstacles, a proposal to review whether the Australian method of judging weaves could offer improvements over the current judging methodology, and also education of our judges to ensure that at least one approach to any contact is a straight line approach. This is not always an easy task — after all, everyone can have a different viewpoint on what this means.

The JSC are always open to receiving questions, feedback and suggestions from the wider community and if anyone would like to email the JSC our address is judges@dnzac.nz

By Joanne Rennell (Chair)

