

Agility

2025 Agility Clubs Conference



The 2025 Agility Clubs' Conference, on 23-24 August, marked the second gathering of its kind in three years, following the highly successful inaugural event in 2023. With positive feedback from that first conference, the Dogs New Zealand Agility Committee decided to broaden the format for 2025, allowing each club to send up to three representatives — one focussing on show management, one on show secretary duties, and one on foundation training.

Delegates began arriving on Friday evening and Saturday morning, before being whisked by minibus to Purina Pro Plan Auckland Exhibition Centre for a hearty communal breakfast. Once everyone was settled and fuelled up, participants split into three workshop groups for the weekend's training:

Foundation Training Led by Sallie Remon, this stream explored essential skills for young dogs, along with an introduction to flatwork and Hoopers from Elaine Rohde.

Show Management Guided by Wayne Turner, attendees examined how to run effective, safe and enjoyable shows, including the correct processes for managing Levels 1 to 4 dog aggression incidents (*see page 10 of the September 2025 issue of NZ Dog World for more on aggressive dog incident reporting*).

Show Secretary (*session pictured above*) With Diana Gausden presenting, this group was instructed on who the show secretary was and how to perform the role to their best abilities. Later, Pete de Wit shared tips on how to make the most of the Agility Committee website (www.dogagility.org.nz).

The first day wrapped up with a light-hearted quiz over dinner, testing what had been learned, and giving everyone the chance to unwind.

The second day built on Saturday's work. Show secretaries were introduced to the new FastPawz programme by Peter Franz and Pete de Wit, while the other groups continued to deepen their skills in their specialist areas. After a final shared lunch, delegates headed home armed with fresh ideas, useful resources and renewed enthusiasm for supporting their clubs. In fact, some of the tips from the show manager group were already being put into practice at Ribbon Trials within weeks of the conference.

A particular highlight for many was the comprehensive support material. Each participant received a USB drive loaded with presentations, documentation and FastPawz software, ensuring they could continue their learning after the weekend. The mix of structured sessions, interactive discussions and informal networking created a valuable and enjoyable experience.

Here's what some attendees had to say:

- "The AC did a fabulous job in preparation. It was extremely valuable to 'shoot the breeze' with other clubs to troubleshoot big issues. As a ShowSec newbie, the chance to get hands-on with FastPawz was the biggest highlight."
- "The timing couldn't have been better as I step into a new show manager role. The weekend gave me confidence, resources, and connections to take back to my club. A personal highlight? Being on the winning quiz team — Weave Got This."
- "The conference was excellent once again — well organised, informative, and I highly recommend it to anyone who gets the chance to attend."
- "As someone who underestimated the scale of the show secretary role, the sessions were a real eye-opener. I came away with a whole new level of respect for the work show secs put in."
- "What a massive effort by the AC to realise a vision for bringing people together to learn stuff, network of course and improve our sport. I really enjoyed the foundations presentation and training by Sally and Elaine. It seemed that there was a real thirst for knowledge in how to make foundation training better."

Beyond the formal workshops, the conference provided a rare chance for clubs from across the country to connect face-to-face. Delegates enjoyed good food, comfortable accommodation and plenty of time to share stories, compare approaches and build relationships.

The positive atmosphere carried on to social media, where delegates reflected on their experiences:

- "Big shout out to the AC and everyone involved... lots of good stuff and loved meeting new people."
- "Massive effort, and I know you're still working hard even after the weekend. Thanks — well worth it!"
- "Great weekend, learned lots, and very well fed."
- "It was so well organised, with great content delivered in a fun way. Also reassuring to hear other clubs face the same challenges."
- "A fantastic weekend — well organised, great topics, and delicious food."
- "Such a valuable opportunity to learn from presenters and fellow participants. Thank you to the AC for putting in so much effort."

The 2025 Agility Clubs' Conference reinforced the value of bringing clubs together to share knowledge, strengthen skills and build connections. With so much expertise on offer, both in the sessions and around the dining tables, attendees left inspired and better equipped to support the sport we all love. The Agility Committee's efforts in managing the logistics — travel, accommodation, meals and programme delivery — were widely recognised and appreciated.

It is clear that weekends like this play an important role in ensuring Agility remains strong, consistent and enjoyable for everyone involved. By equipping volunteers with knowledge, confidence, and networks of support, the conference strengthens the backbone of the sport which are the clubs and the people who give their time so generously. 🐾

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Photo by Pete de Witt