



The newest AKC sport of dogs leaps onto the scene in Houston.

The AKC Launches

BY DIANE VASEY

The first licensed AKC agility trial took off with leaps and bounds on Aug. 11 in Houston at the Astro World Series of Dog Shows. The popular canine obstacle-course event promises to become a favorite of dog fanciers.

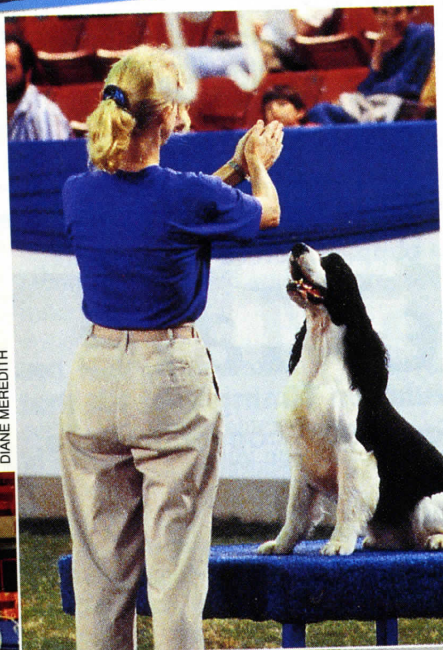
There were 192 entries in the trial, representing 58 breeds. Exhibitors came from all over the country and from Canada. John Loomis, from Jacksonville, Ark., judged the dogs as they traversed the maze of brightly decorated obstacles. After the last dogs ran the course, exhibitors and AKC officials celebrated in style, with champagne, strawberries and other assorted treats.

What better place to hold the event than at an entertainment extravaganza where there is something for everyone? Kennel clubs everywhere should consider adding to their shows some of the draws that were on site: the Canine Good Citizen test, a parade of rescue dogs from the All Breed Rescue Association, a graduation ceremony for hearing and service dogs, an art show and contest, an

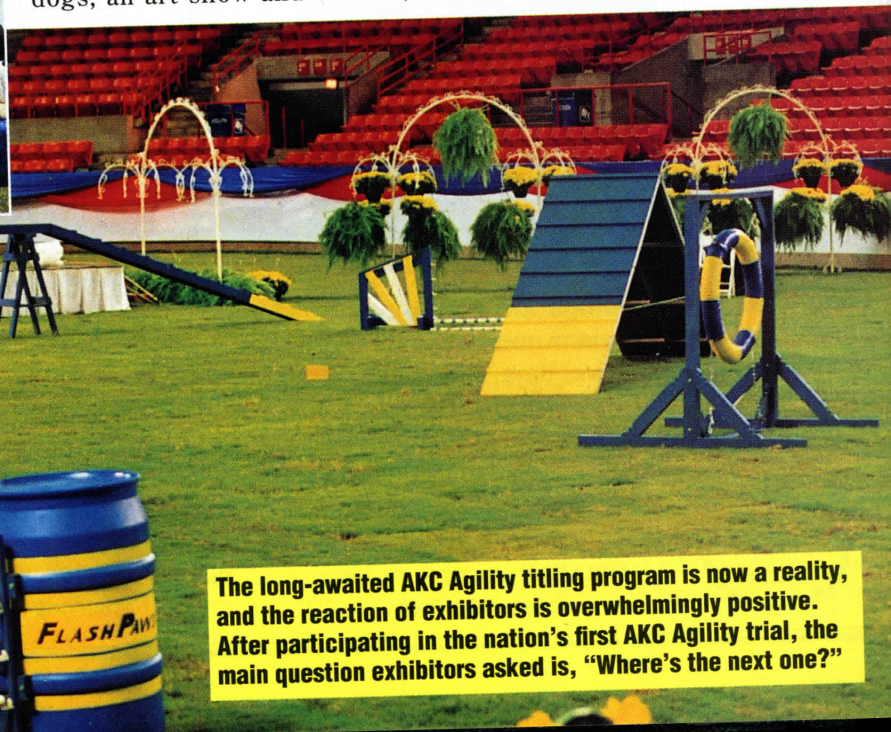
Alaskan Malamute weight pull, flyball, a Frisbee exhibition and vendors galore.

At the Astroarena where the agility trial was held, excitement was in the air, electrifying and contagious. The setting was spectacular, with brightly colored obstacles that looked like a playground of gym equipment or a doggy amusement park placed on a field of bluegrass sod.

The fun, supportive atmosphere of an agility trial belies the competitive spirit of some who race the course. Dogs and their handlers must think if they want to compete for the fastest time and the fewest mistakes. The dogs race through the challenging obstacle course with the help of the handler's hand and verbal signals. They leap over decorative and creative jumps, weave between poles,

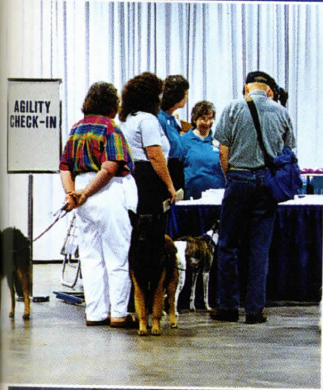


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The long-awaited AKC Agility titling program is now a reality, and the reaction of exhibitors is overwhelmingly positive. After participating in the nation's first AKC Agility trial, the main question exhibitors asked is, "Where's the next one?"

AGILITY



Judge John Loomis performs height inspection for the jump class.



Jane and Gordon Simmons-Moake with Tracy and Spirit.



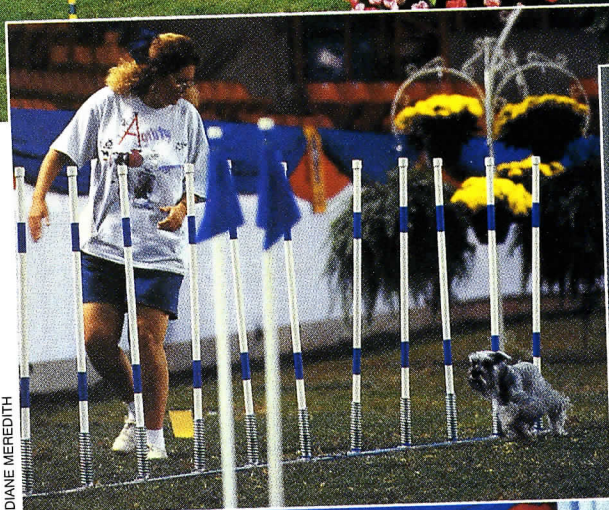
THE NATION'S FIRST AKC AGILITY TRIAL

AKC
AGILITY



AKC officials (clockwise)
Terry Stacy, Wayne Cavanaugh,
Bob McKowen and Ken Marden, a
member of the Board of Directors.

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ILITY

scramble up an A-frame higher than the height of their handlers, walk a balance beam,

speed through tunnels and pause some time in the middle for a controlled stay—all at the direction of their handlers.

"Agility training can help build a dog's confidence, provide needed exercise and help active canines blow off steam in a constructive manner," said Jane Simmons-Moake, author of the award-winning book "Agility Training—the Fun Sport for All Dogs," and founder and training director of FlashPaws Agility Training Center in Houston. Simmons-Moake, who is the owner and trainer of the No. 1 Agility Golden Retriever in 1990, 1992 and 1993 and has several agility grand champion wins, was the agility consultant for the trial and was a member of the AKC Agility Advisory Committee.

"Almost any physically and mentally sound dog can enjoy agility," said Simmons-Moake. "It's great for dogs who have become bored with other forms of dog training, such as competitive obedience. The dogs' attitudes toward obedience work actually improve as a result of the positive working relationship created through agility training."

There are three different levels of competition: novice, open and excellent. With each level, the number and complexity of obstacles increases and the speed required to run it also increases. There are four jump height divisions for dogs of different sizes.

A perfect score is 100; a qualifying score is 85 or above, with no disqualifying faults such as displaced bars on jumps, or missing a contact zone (the area on an obstacle within which the dog must step).

One of the delightful attributes of people who participate in agility trials is the wide variety of experience exhibitors have with other aspects of

What makes agility so exciting is the teamwork required between dog and handler. The course is never arranged the same way twice. At each trial, the handler must choose a unique handling strategy, custom-designed for his or her dog's skills and abilities.

Novice B

- 8" Ra-Joys Dixie Darling, CDX, Pomeranian owned by Carol Fatheree
- 12" Ch. Starbuck Torbay Rave On, C.D., Beagle owned by Marietta Huber
- 18" Farmion Obrigada II, CDX, Portuguese Water Dog owned by Lynmarie Thompson
- 24" Cutwaters Knight Errant, Portuguese Water Dog owned by Lynmarie Thompson and Jane Harding

Novice A

- 8" Shasta Marie Tseng Koi, Shih Tzu owned by Kathy Humphreys Brown
- 12" Briarpatch Jori B. Nicole, Welsh Corgi (Pembroke) owned by Chester and Susan Beans
- 18" Keynote Amber Peach, C.D., Shetland Sheepdog owned by Tev and Scott Brannan
- 24" Little Red Caboose of Tejas, Australian Shepherd owned by Elaine Weiman

Open


- 12" Bautzen's Born to Boogie, Miniature Pinscher owned by Joleen Eizember
- 18" M'ritz Special Edition, Cocker Spaniel owned by Jaime Theobald and David Rameden
- 24" Ramapo's Medicine Man, U.D., Labrador Retriever owned by Marietta Huber

Excellent

- 8" Springtime Stanley J., CDX, Maltese owned by Marilyn Jensen
- 12" Dixie's Delta Dawn, C.D., Shetland Sheepdog owned by Dixie Noble
- 18" Mountaintop Just Dandy, U.D., Shetland Sheepdog owned by Susan Waltman
- 24" Miss Molly's Paradise, Golden Retriever owned by Denise Graham

the sport of dogs. For example, there were 31 conformation Champions at the first AKC agility trial, an Obedience Trial Champion, a Utility Dog Excellent, 22 Utility Dogs, 24 Companion Dog Excellents, 34 Companion Dogs, a Herding Champion, three Tracking Dogs, three Tracking Dog Excellents, four Junior Hunters, a Master Hunter and 26 Canine Good Citizen dogs.

All in all, the Houston Kennel Club did a wonderful job hosting the AKC's first licensed agility trial. "We were very happy to be able to hold the trial here," said Patricia Wilson, a member of the Houston Kennel Club and agility trial chairwoman. "A lot of people deserve a lot of credit for working hard." FlashPaws Agility Training Center supplied the equipment, stewarding staff, printed materials and organized the event. There were numerous sponsors, and each exhibitor received a commemorative T-shirt, pin, cooler, event catalog and coupons for free dog food.

"We could not have asked for a better beginning," said Bob McKowen, the AKC's vice president of performance events. "The cooperation and enthusiasm of the participants is a strong indication of the future of this event. We believe the regulations and policies are on target for what we believe people want in an AKC agility trial." 



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