

Animal Aid Special Projects Team

Volunteer Agility Crew Worker Packet:

DO FIRST:

1. Complete a Special Projects Volunteer Application – If you have not yet done so, complete **the online Volunteer form** (<https://www.AnimalAidPDX.org/helping/newVolunteer.php>) – indicate on the first page that you are only interested in working Special Projects at this time. Entering your information online will get you into the database right away. Remember to print out a copy for signing!
We need one application per worker. *Note: If you've submitted an application for a prior trial, we still have it on file.*
2. Email Samantha.Balmes@animalaidpdx.org to learn how to sign up for your preferred shift.

DO SECOND: Please read these two sections of this packet

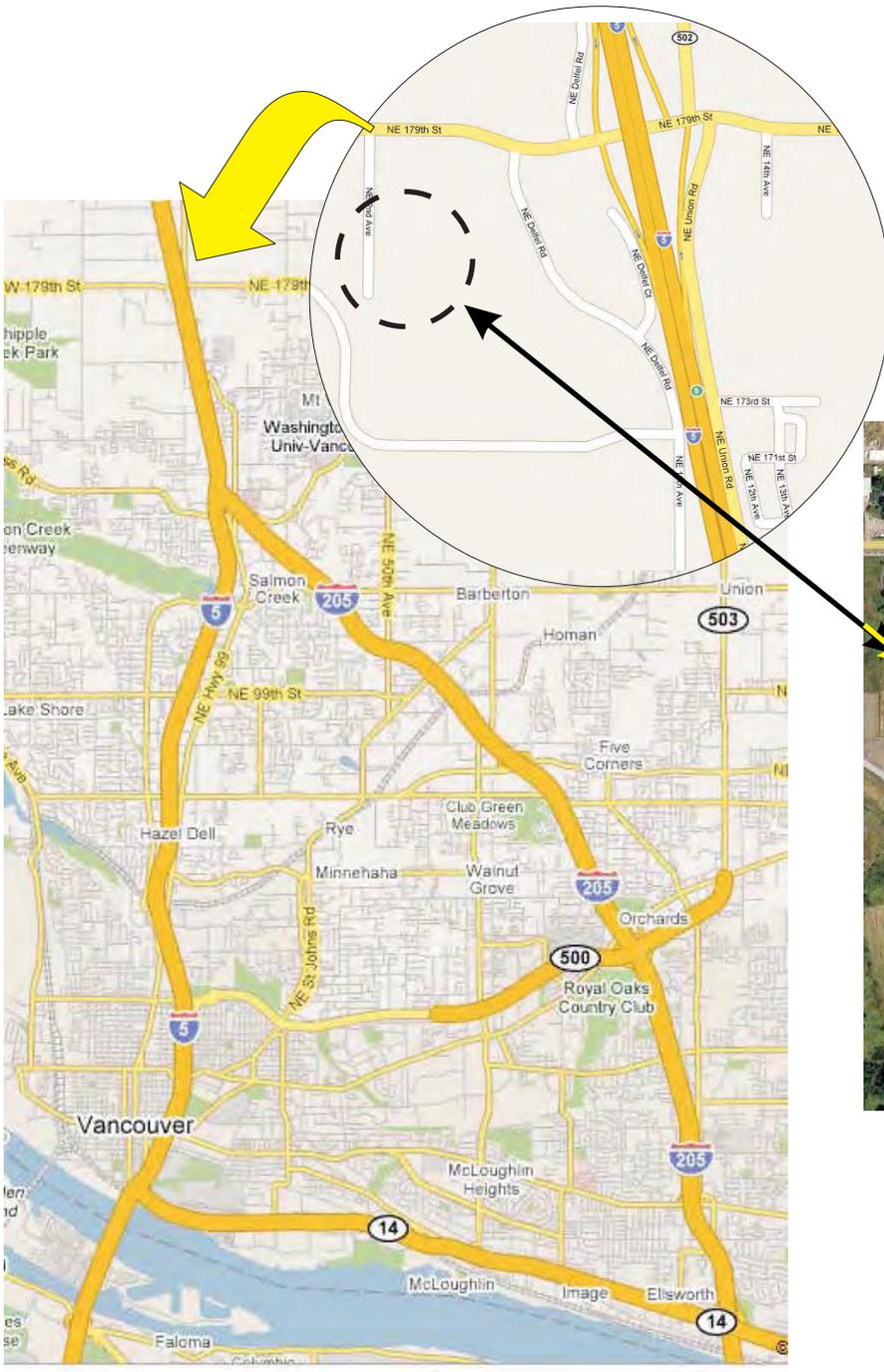
3. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – **Make sure you understand these.**
4. “Dictionary” of some agility terms that you will hear while you are on the job.

NO ACTION REQUIRED: Event reference materials

5. Maps, both to the event and of the event site
6. Learn more about Animal Aid, Inc. at <http://www.AnimalAidPDX.org>
7. Learn more about American Kennel Club Agility programs at <http://www.akc.org/events/agility/index.cfm>

Step 1: Find the Clark County Fairground

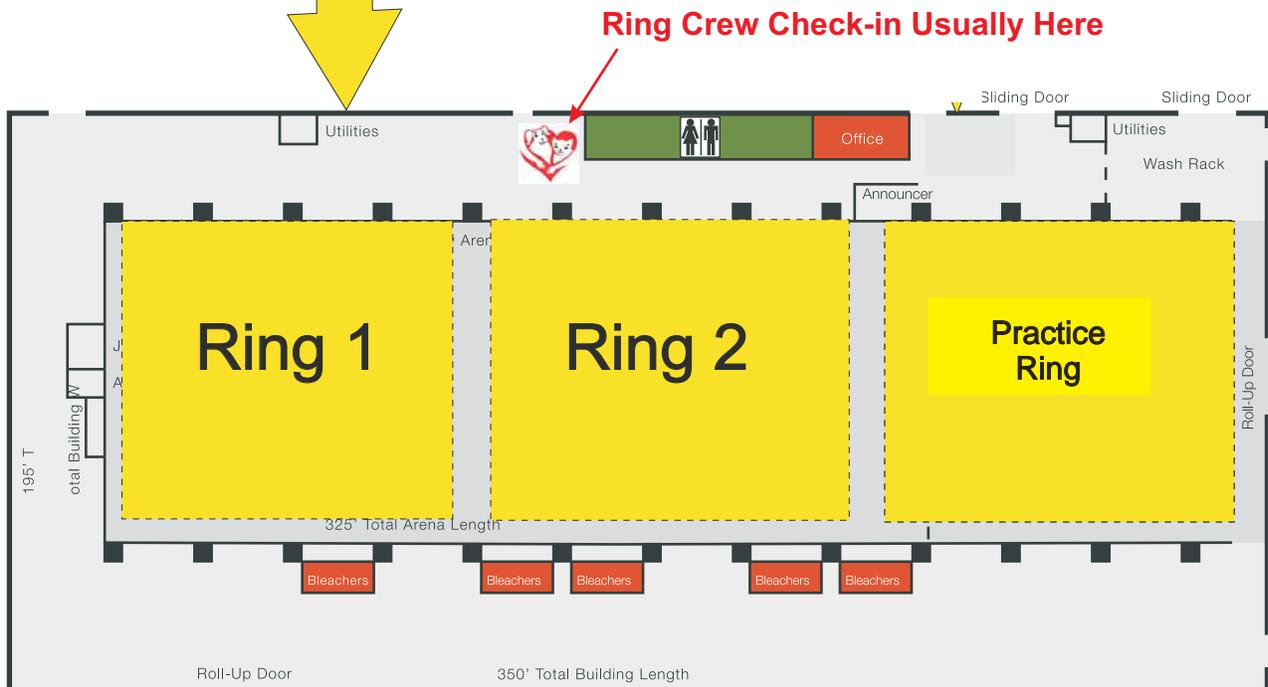
1. Just North of where I-5 and I-205 meet, take Exit 9 (Ridgefield) and head West on NE 179th.
2. Turn left onto NE 2nd
3. Turn left into the fairgrounds and follow the road around to the parking areas around the arena (go to the next page).



Step 2: Park and Check In



Clark County Fairground:
Dr. Jack Giesy Arena



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

About your role at the event

When and how will I be trained in what I'm going to be doing? Even if you have not worked at an AKC agility trial before you will have no difficulty learning the job IF:

- You review this entire packet twice. This applies to ALL workers!
- You remember to check in at least ½ hour before the start of your shift so you can learn your area of responsibility. If you are working the afternoon shift, you may be paired with a person on the morning shift to work together before that person checks out.

When/where do I check in for work? UNLESS NOTIFIED OTHERWISE morning shift workers should be on site and checking in by 7:30, earlier if you need training (welcome to the world of dog sports!) and folks on the afternoon shift should be checking in at 11:30 am. There are two levels of checking in: (1) go first to Animal Aid table inside the arena (see the attached map) to sign in, discuss any training issues, and learn your ring assignment; and (2) identify yourself to the Gate Steward (see the dictionary) of your ring. It is normal to start running dogs by 8:00 am, and we need to be in place and ready to go by 7:55 am.

How do I know what shift I'll be working? We are making every effort to place you in the shift you indicate as your first preference. Be flexible, however – we may need to adjust shifts to match specific needs. **Your shift will be confirmed by phone or email before the event.**

What should I wear? Dress for the temperature – you will be miserable if you don't plan ahead! Dress in layers and bring gloves. "Little Hottie" type handwarmers will be available, but they only go so far. Running shoes or tennis shoes are a good choice for feet. *Note:* As representatives of Animal Aid, we want to be looked at with respect – clean clothes with no tears and no "interesting" logos or messages, please. We will also ask you to wear one of our red Animal Aid volunteer aprons so that officials can spot us easily – please wear it with pride.

What should I bring? And where can I leave it while I'm working? Try not to bring more than you can safely store in your car trunk. Animal Aid will have table set up to act as our center of operations, but we may not be able to have someone there to keep an eye on things.

Ideas:

- Camera! We encourage photography, but the Arena is not well lit and you will not be able to use a flash.
- You may want to bring your own camp chair for breaks, but leave it in your car until you see whether it is needed.
- A lunch if you have special dietary needs. All snacks, drinks, and lunch food options available at the fairground vendor will be of a high-cal, high-energy nature. Our hosts will make sure that there are snacks and ice chests of water and sodas specifically for workers, however, and their locations will be pointed out to you.

Where do I park? Use the lots immediately surrounding the arena (see the map). Carpooling is strongly encouraged. Follow the usual precautions about leaving valuables in your car.

Can I bring my dog? No, not if you are working that day. You will, however, see other people walking around with non-competing dogs – this is a common way to acclimatize a dog to the environment of a competition.

Can I pet the other dogs? Only (a) outside the ring (see below important information about this point in the **Important "What If Questions"** section later in this document) and (b) only if you *specifically* asked the handler first.

FAQ: About the Event

What is “canine agility” anyway? Dog agility is a competitive sport that tests a person's skills in training and handling of a dog over a timed obstacle course. Competitors race against the clock as the dogs jump hurdles, scale ramps, burst through tunnels, traverse a see-saw and weave through a line of poles in an obstacle course designed to challenge both the handler and the dog. With scoring based on faults similar to equestrian show jumping, dog agility has become an exciting spectator event.

Who will be running in this particular event? Everyone from junior handlers who have been training the family dog to serious, highly-skilled handlers who are working to qualify to go to Nationals.

Where will the volunteer workers actually be during the events? Ring crews are seated inside each of the 100' by 100' agility rings during the competition. One or both rings can be active at any given time.

What will the workers be doing?

Setting the poles on the jumps to the proper height and following each run, replacing any poles that have been knocked off.

Note: competitions are run in height order. For instance, we would finish all the 12” dogs before moving to the 16” dogs.



Chute straightening -- a chute is a short tunnel that ends in long, flat tube of cloth that can get tangled when a dog runs through it. A person with good knees is needed for this job!



Adjusting table heights – the table has three possible height settings, based on the size of the dogs. To move the height up or down, we merely swap legs.



Leash-running – making sure a dog's leash gets from the entrance of the ring to the exit before the dog finishes the course (and remember that some very complex runs are completed in less than half a minute!). This is a good job for two people to share.



Who are these *attractive* people in the photos? These are part of the hardworking crew that manned a three-day, outdoor trial for us in the heat of summer. Thank you to Robin Babcock, Joe Camp, Kat Hearn and many others for sending us some great shots, which we are incorporating into our training materials.

Most of the jumps have TWO bars! I can see that the top one goes to whatever height is yelled out by the gate steward or the judge (“bars to 24!”), but what happens with the second bar?

If the judge does not stipulate (and some do), the rule is to set the lower bar at half the height of the top bar, rounding up if there is not a clear choice. For instance:

“bars to 16” = second bar at 8”

“bars to 20” = second bar at 12” (rounded up because there is no bar holder at 10”)

IMPORTANT: Worry about moving the second bar *only* if there is time to do so – sometimes the right answer is to just leave it alone. **Judges prefer a quick pace over meticulously placed lower bars.**

Do I run out and replace a bar right after it gets knocked down? ASK THE JUDGE BEFORE THE COMPETITION STARTS. Typically, a bar stays down until the dog is leaving the course, but sometimes the judge has designed a course where a quick – and I mean *quick* – repair is needed.

So will I be *running* most of my shift? If you are a bar-setter, no – though when it’s time to move you are expected to move quickly. The majority of your time will be spent sitting very, very still. In the advanced classes you may never see a bar dropped! Chute-straighteners and leash runners, on the other hand, are up and active for every single dog.

When, exactly, does the leash runner go pick up the leash from a dog preparing to run? Stay unobtrusive and motionless until the dog has crossed the start line (usually a jump). Then grab that leash and get to the exit by whatever path is most efficient **AND does not attract the running dog’s attention in any way.** Since you have to deliver the leash to a specific location at the exit and be back, ready to pick up the leash of the next dog, in under a minute, you may want to share the job. If two runners meet in the middle to exchange the leash, neither has to cover the full distance.

So what is this “broad jump” I see in the Novice ring? This wasn’t in our list of obstacles! The broad jump is usually seen only for Novice and FAST competitions. It looks like a set of slanted boards laid close together, side by side, to create a low, raised surface that the dog must jump without touching. The size of the broad jump is changed by adding or deleting boards – watch the judge for guidance on this one.

Will I be assigned to just one job? Probably not. One thing we’ve learned from previous trials is that workers prefer variety! As we spell people for breaks, they will likely be asked to rotate back in at a new position. The pattern for people returning from a break will be (a) sit with the current holder of the position until you are totally confident that you understand what you will be responsible for, then (b) officially take over that spot and release the other person for their break.

FAQ: Important “What If” Questions

What if a dog comes up to me in the ring? You become a fence post – you do not move, you do not even look in its direction. This is very important with inexperienced dogs that become dazzled by the crowd and forget their handler

But what if a dog is not in control and tries to leave the ring? Block the exit if you can, but *let the handler manage the dog*. That dog and handler will be disqualified if you grab the dog.

What if I’m working a very long class and I need to, umm, “excuse myself” for a minute?

We will try to check in with all workers at least visually every half hour or so. If you need someone to sub for you briefly, we will do it as soon as there is a break in the action. Plan ahead!

Can I take a snack / lunch / drink / cell phone into the ring with me while I work? In a nutshell: no. If it has any potential for distracting a dog, leave it outside. Exceptions – bottled water, and cameras with no flash and no “red-eye” blink (*only* in unobtrusive locations – when in doubt, check).

I didn’t get my application faxed/mailed in! Can I still come? Yes, if (a) you bring the application with you to check-in, and (b) you’ve confirmed via phone or email that we know you are coming.

What’s involved in “checking in” at the Animal Aid table before I work? Why do I have to get there one half hour earlier than my shift? You will need every second of that half hour. You need to:

- Sign in for your shift (clipboard), giving time of arrival
- Turn in or sign your application if you haven’t already done so
- Submit any forms/paperwork you need signed for another organization (e.g., community service at school) – you will get those back at the end of your last shift
- Put on a red vest and/ or Animal Aid badge so you are clearly identifiable as an Animal Aid volunteer
- If you need it, you will receive a whirlwind training course in your first assigned job. You may be asked to train your replacement at the end of your shift.
- Take a quick tour of your ring and the resources (e.g., snacks, water, pop, restrooms etc.) around it.

Do I also have to “check out”? Yes.

- Sign out (clipboard), noting time you got “off duty”
- Turn in any badges/vests
- Pick up any forms you had submitted for signature earlier. If you are working for Community Service hours, I will ask you one or two questions about WHY this event qualifies for community service before I sign your forms. Don’t worry! I’ll let you know in advance what the questions could be.

Who is “the boss”? For volunteer issues, the on-site Ring Crew Coordinator for Animal Aid personnel in all rings. Each individual ring will also have a Crew Chief, usually an experienced volunteer, who makes decisions concerning where each of you will work, and who will rotate you throughout the day. For actual operational issues, each ring will have its own Ring Steward (see the dictionary) who, next to the Judge, has the final word on most matters.

How, exactly, is my volunteering as ring crew helping Animal Aid? The host organizations donate a specific amount per crew member per event we work. We have no overhead costs to dilute the impact of your contribution – the money will go *directly* into the Animal Aid Fund for Urgent Veterinary Care, with which we assist community members who need urgent veterinary care for their companion animals.

A Worker's Quick Dictionary of Agility Terms

Classes

"Class" refers to the specific kind of competition in the ring. Classes you will be seeing include:

- ❑ **Standard class** – this is the foundation class in the sport of dog agility. All obstacles are used, including three contact obstacles - A-frame, Dog Walk and See-Saw - two types of tunnels – an open tunnel and a collapsed tunnel or "chute" - weave poles, table, tire jump and a variety of other hurdles and jumps, all of which are set in a sequence designed by the judge. The competitor with the fewest number of faults is the winner, with ties awarded to the dog with the fastest time.
- ❑ **Jumpers with Weaves** – this is a class that showcases pure speed. There are no contact obstacles at all, just hurdles, tunnels, and weave poles.
- ❑ **F.A.S.T.** is a game designed to challenge a handler's course handling strategy and ability to control the dog at increased speed and distance.

Course Map

Competitors are not told what the course will look like until the day of the trial. Each morning small maps are distributed, one for each level of competition, showing a schematic of the course and outlining any special competition requirements. There is an example at the end of this section.

Course Time

The maximum amount of time a team can take to finish the course and still qualify. You may see the judge out measuring the course with a small wheeled device – that distance is plugged into a formula to calculate the course times. Generally speaking, smaller dogs get slightly more time than larger dogs, novice dogs are allowed more time than experienced dogs.

Fault

Some act that loses the dog/handler team points – Novice teams are allowed to lose more points than Open teams and still qualify, and Excellent Level teams must be perfect ("run clean") to qualify at all. Each occurrence of a fault during a run is signaled by the judge and recorded by the scribe. Common examples:

- ❑ A "refusal" includes hesitating before taking an obstacle, not taking the obstacle at all, or bailing out before finishing
- ❑ "Time faults" are seconds over course time
- ❑ Wrong course (for instance, the dog fell for a "trap" or the handler just got lost)
- ❑ Fly-offs, missed contact zones on contact obstacles
- ❑ Knocking down a bar going over a jump

Fly-off

The dog has exited an obstacle unsafely, not touching the yellow contact zone on the exit side (e.g., leapt off a see-saw before it hit the ground). In many competitions, this is an automatic elimination.

Hurdles/Jumps



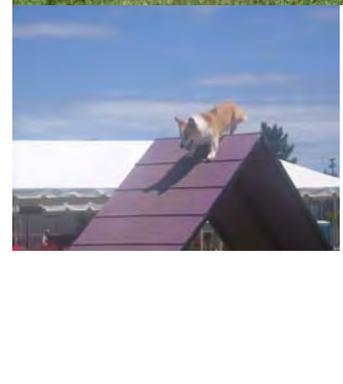
Jumps are the primary reason the ring crew is needed – the cross poles may be knocked down during a run, and the poles need to be set at different heights for each size category of dog. They usually have an upper and a lower pole, each end of which rests gently in a cup-shaped holder on the side supports. Jump supports frequently have small fence-like “wings” that force the handler to work further away from the dog. You will also see “spread jumps” where there are not one, but up to three top bars, making the jump deep as well as tall.

Obstacles

“Obstacle” is the term used for anything that is not a jump/hurdle:

“Contact obstacle” refers to things that, for safety reasons, have specific yellow zones on entry and exit that the dog **must touch with his feet** (that is, no jumping off the top!)

- ❑ A-frame – 2 heights: for tiny dogs and for 12" and up
- ❑ Dog walk – a 12' long, 1' wide plank that is 4' off the ground
- ❑ See-saw – a 1' wide, 12' long “teeter-totter”, the same for all dogs



“Weave Poles” – Anywhere from five to 12 poles set 18-21” apart in a straight line in the ground. Required performance is the same for all sizes of dogs – enter on the right side of the first pole, exit on the left side of the last pole. And don’t miss any!



“Tunnels”

- Pipe tunnels – flexible tubes 24” in diameter
- Closed tunnels, usually referred to as “Chutes” – a short tunnel ending in a long tube of fabric which collapses flat onto the ground.



There are only two obstacles whose height is changed for different sizes of dogs:

- “Tire Jump” – just like it sounds! A fake tire suspended on a frame, through which the dog jumps.
- “Table” – the dog must lie down (or sit – the judge’s choice!) for 5 full seconds (the judge counts out loud) before continuing



“Q”

Shorthand for “qualify”– that is, “pass the test”. It is a major triumph for a team to “double-Q” – qualify in both Jumpers with Weaves and Standard classes on the same day. A team working toward a MACH title needs 20 double-Q’s!

Scribe sheet

For every single run, each dog has an individual score card, or “scribe sheet”, on which the scribe (another worker) notes all of the judges calls and signals. The timer’s assistant adds the clock time. These sheets are then taken by a “Scribe Runner” (may be one of us) to the Scorer’s table for compilation.

“Small to Tall” / “Tall to Small”

Each competition is run in order of the dogs’ heights – if they start with small dogs and finish with tall on one day, typically the order is reversed the next day.

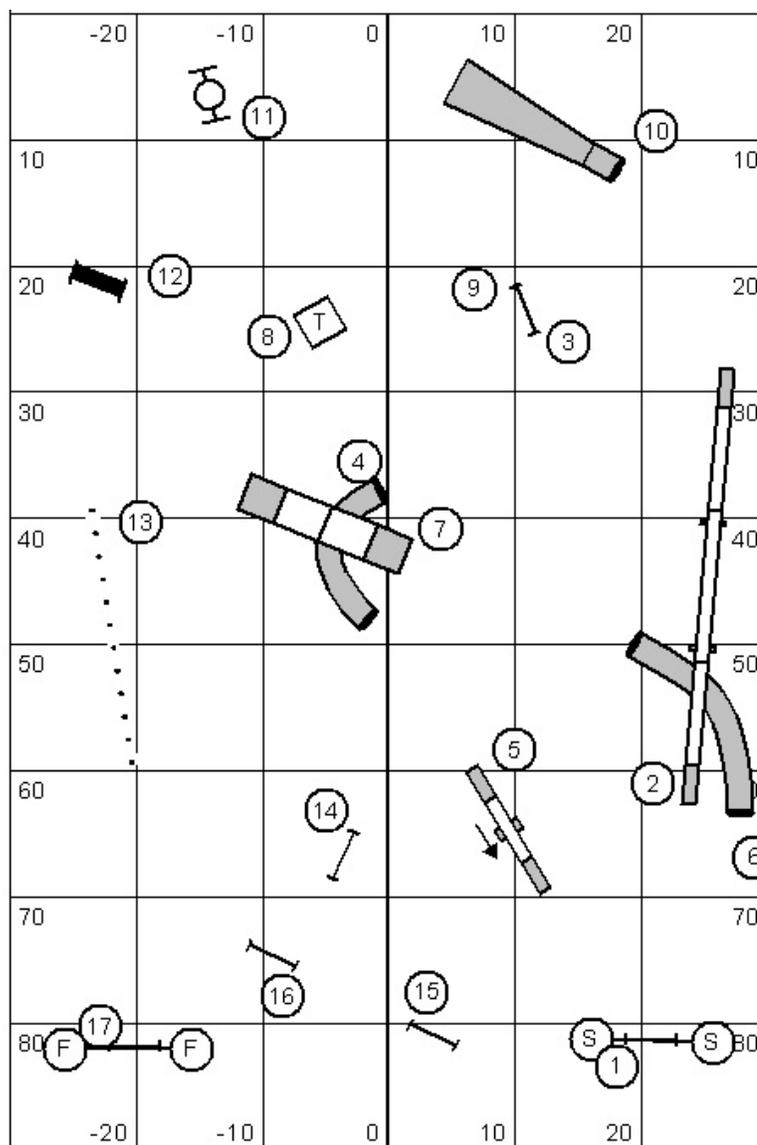
Trap

It is a fault to take an obstacle or jump not on the course. Judges *deliberately* include obstacles in the ring that are not part of the actual course – and in places that will be very tempting to dogs running at full speed. The handler's job is to spot the potential problem spots and to have a plan for helping the dog avoid them.

Walkthrough

This is where the handlers – without dogs – walk the course they will be running. This allows them to practice strategies that seem reasonable when looking at a map*, but which may prove difficult in real life. It also allows the handler to evaluate the course for “traps” and to plan for them. *Note: This is also the time where the ring crews decide how to best disperse themselves around the course, but it is important that we stay out of the way of the handlers.*

* Here is an example of the course map that competitors see for the very first time the morning of competition. See if you can figure out what piece of equipment each of the symbols represents and in what order the dog must take them:



AKC: Quick Reference for Animal Aid Ring Crews

Gate Steward Yells	Single Bar Jumps	Double Bar Jumps (top 2 bars parallel, bottom 2 in an X)	Triple Bar Jump (ascending, low front to high back)	A-Frame Height	Table Height	Tire Height	Broad Jump Depth (2 times the jump height)
JUMPS TO 4"	4" & ground	4" top bars NO X	ground & 4"	4-8" dogs Lowest setting	4-12" dogs Shortest legs	4" marking	8" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 8"	8" & 4"	8" top, X at 4"	8" markings			8" marking	16" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 12"	12" & 8"	12" top, X at 8"	12" markings	12-26" dogs Highest setting	16-20" dogs Middle legs	12" marking	24" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 16"	16" & 8"	16" top, X at 12"	16" markings			16" marking	32" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 20"	20" & 12"	20" top, X at 16"	20" markings	24-26" dogs Longest legs	24-26" dogs Longest legs	20" marking	40" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 24"	24" & 12"	24" top, X at 20"	24" markings			24" marking	48" = ___ slats
JUMPS TO 26"	26" & 12"	26" top, X at 20"	26" markings			26" marking	52" = ___ slats

BEFORE THE FIRST DOG RUNS Crew Leads Will Confirm with the Judge and Communicate to their Crew:

- Is the tire chain marked correctly or do we have to subtract 4" from the jump height for the tire setting?
- When do you want the chute straightened?
- Are there any poles we can set while the dog is on course? If yes, describe exactly when.
- Where do you want the leashed place at the exit? (yes, this varies)
- Where is the best path for the leash runners so they don't block the score table's view of the judge? (may need to move the scoring table forward so we can pass the leash off behind them)
- If there is a broad jump, how many slats should be used for each depth (make notes on chart above).
- Where are the clean-up kit/tools? (actually, that one you need to ask the host club)