

NZDJJA

Regulation review

by Lavina Diamanti

In 2020, NZ Dog Judges Association responded to the request from Dogs New Zealand for more judges to cope with the COVID-19 restrictions we found ourselves facing. And respond we did. We took radical steps to fast track NZ judges through the examination system. The effect of the regulation changes certainly had some positives, allowing us to promote judges who would otherwise have been several years away from completing the requirements. Plus, many specialist clubs have contracted Peer Judges for their shows which allowed them to still contract a breed specialist.

But we also found that there were some downsides which we hadn't anticipated. Open Shows have become almost as popular as Championship Shows and are drawing large entries. The consequence of this has been that some of the brand-new judges were starting their career with a large Open Show appointment, in some cases 150 or more dogs. This, for many, has been the proverbial 'Baptism by Fire'. We felt that this is overwhelming for a trainee judge and also unfair to exhibitors who have come to expect a certain level of knowledge from an Open Show judge. We also observed that in the process of trying to fast track judges, holding two sets of exams in a year didn't allow sufficient time between exams for candidates to gain the depth of study and learning required.

We, as an organisation, are committed to producing quality judges who have a thorough understanding of dog judging and the breeds they are studying, and who will represent us well on the world stage once we can travel again. Unfortunately, the 'COVID-19 Regulations' did not entirely support that vision and to continue with them in that format didn't make sense. It has, however, given us the opportunity to step outside the box and test what works and what doesn't.

Where to from here? It was always our intention to review the regulations prior to November 2021 and assess their success or otherwise. We have completed this review and have opted to essentially return to a modified version of the pre-COVID-19 regulations, retaining some of the things which had positive benefits. The main changes are:

- Reinstatement of the Ribbon Parade Panel, to allow our new, trainee judges to complete their first five assignments in a more relaxed atmosphere without the pressure of large numbers of dogs. We hope clubs will support these judges with ribbon parades to allow them to gain the necessary hands-on experience.
- Reinstatement of the Examination on Rules and Regulations and Glossary of Terms for those aspiring to the Open Show panel. This is an important part of the training process and needs to be cemented early in a judge's education process.
- For new Open Show judges (promoted from 2022 onwards) their first two Open Show appointments will be limited to the

group they aspire to and no more than two others. (This will *not* apply to those who were promoted to the Open Show panel under the current regulations.)

- Reinstatement of the requirement for practical examinations for 5th, 6th & 7th group candidates.

The review committee thought some changes in the COVID-19 regs were positive and have retained them, some in a modified form:

- Retaining banking of exams but from the 4th group onwards and one exam pass only.
- Retaining 100 breed questions but reinstating 20 Rules and Regs and Glossary of terms for 5th, 6th & 7th group candidates.
- Retaining observation criteria for Open Show judges aspiring to a group panel.
- Retaining the peer judging for Open and Championship speciality shows.

We are aware that our judges need a lot of support and training in the first few years of their judging career, which has been a major consideration in these changes. We have also made changes to the Appendices which outline the National Training Guide and the mandatory training requirements. We are in the process of implementing online training; we're ready to start rolling out stage one, the new breed open book exams. Stage two, the Aspiring Modules, is on target to be available online for the next round of applications in 2022.

We are also committed to providing more support and resources to our branches to assist them with the training component of their meetings.

We will only be holding one set of exams in 2022. Important dates for these exams are shown below. Practical exam dates are currently being finalised, but we are hoping these will be in July.

Happy judging. 🐾

Important Dates

1 December 2021	Effective date of new judges regulations
31 January 2022	Application close off
22 March 2022	Theory exams

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