

## **Obstacle Course 1, 2 and 3**

### **Object**

The object of these badges is to demonstrate the dog and handler have learned to work together to navigate a short agility course that includes 3 obstacles. While a harness is allowed on the dog, the handler should be aware of the risks to the dog if the harness gets caught on the equipment. The harness should be a non-restrictive type (V-front) so the dog can jump and move safely and properly over the obstacles. Harnesses that have a horizontal strap across the dog's chest cannot be used.

### **It needs to be fun!**

Handlers should take the introduction of the obstacles slowly, so as not to create a fearful association. Agility should always be fun and rewarding for the dog, not scary! Dogs that show hesitation should be given the option to not take the obstacle (but not get a reward) or to take the obstacle (and get a really special reward). Force in the form of pulling on the dog or his leash/collar/harness should never be used to get a dog over an obstacle. Often, if the dog understands clicker training, you can get him to interact with the contact obstacles by first clicking and rewarding the dog for looking at it, then click/reward a step toward it, then a step on it, and so on. If it is the dog's decision to be on the obstacle, they will be much more confident about it! If doing this with the teeter, be sure you have a spotter to keep it from falling out from under the dog unexpectedly.

### **Use caution with young dogs**

Handlers with dogs less than 18 months of age should understand the risks to their dog's joints and development if they choose to have the dog perform agility obstacles repeatedly. Jumps higher than the dog's elbows and slowing or stopping on the down slope of a standard height A-frame or Dog walk can be very hard on a dog's shoulders and joints. If the dog slams the teeter that can also cause jarring and impact injuries to the dog if the growth plates in the legs are not fully closed (around 18 months for most medium to large sized dogs, around 1 year for small/toy size dogs). Handlers should exercise caution in multiple repetition (more than 3 or 4 times a day) of obstacles with young dogs.

### **Responsiveness and control**

Dogs performing for the Obstacle badges should demonstrate that they are responding to the handler cues (verbal or body cues) when performing the obstacles. They should also show reasonable control and an ability to perform each obstacle safely. If the dog is just running a straight line at full speed and happens to do the obstacles in his path before taking off on a victory run around the ring, they will need to demonstrate they can perform the obstacles with more control to get the badge.

The dog does not need to stop on the contact zones, but must touch them on both the upside and down side of the contact obstacles. The handler should be able to stop or slow the dog on course if he is getting too fast to be performing safely.

The dog needs to be confident enough with the obstacles to work parallel to or ahead of the handler. The dog should not need coaxing during the badge test.