

FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (AISBL)

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FCI AGILITY COMMISSION

GUIDELINES FOR AGILITY JUDGES



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Introduction

- These guidelines are meant to help judges in all countries who are members of the FCI come to the same understanding/interpretation of the rules.
- They are not intended to change or add anything to the rules.
- Different interpretations can be caused by the translation in different languages.
- These guidelines are compiled in such a way that new proposals can be added on.
- Proposals can be sent in 6 weeks before the next FCI-Agility Commission meeting.
- Therefore, judges should always use the latest version of these guidelines.

1. Judge's criteria

An agility judge should always take into account that agility should be fun for the dog, the handler and the spectators.

An agility judge should be able to design a course with the correct level of difficulty.

An agility judge should have worked a dog her/himself so he can appreciate what it is like being an agility competitor.

An agility judge should always be fair and just. Personal feelings should not interfere with her/his decisions.

An agility judge should be unwavering, confident and courteous.

An agility judge should be able to make quick and reliable decisions.

An agility judge must be capable of adjusting her/his course design at a moment's notice, for example due to the weather conditions or the condition of the floor surface.

2. Judging ethics

While officiating the judge is strict but fair and always courteous.

The judge should be competent, act impartially and without theatrics.

The judge should not try to pick fault in every detail and where there is doubt, the benefit should be given to the dog and handler.

An agility judge should judge all the competitors the same way.

The judge should always concentrate and make her/his decisions without any hesitation. He/she always sticks to his/her decisions.

The judge keeps strictly to the Rules and Regulations.

A judge should not get into a conversation with a competitor in the ring. If need be he/she can briefly tell a handler why he/she has been eliminated.

The judge may discuss his/her decisions or course design with the competitors only when he/she has finished judging.

A judge does not criticise decisions and behaviour of a colleague openly, but tries to speak to him/her privately.

A judge is always aware that he/she should lead by example, even when he/she is not officiating.

A judge should under no circumstance solicit for a judging appointment.

3. Appearance

An agility judge should wear suitable attire, which distinguishes him/her from the competitors.

An agility judge should always conduct himself/herself properly and behave as a worthy agility representative.

An agility judge must indicate faults and refusals with hand signals. The arm should be clearly raised above the head. Eliminations should be signalled clearly so that neither the handlers nor the spectators are in doubt about the decision. Do not get into discussions with competitors or spectators about any judging decision.

4. Personal items

It is advisable for an agility judge to have the following items with him/her:

- Whistle (2 – one as a replacement)
- Stop watch (in case the stop watch of the timer breaks down)
- Measuring wheel
- Rules and Regulations that apply in the country where the show is held
- Measuring tape
- Personal equipment to measure dogs (Small and Medium)
- Judging pads and pencil
- Adhesive tape

5. Preparing the competition

The agility judge should communicate with the show representative to ascertain the following:

Which rules and guidelines apply.

Layout and size of the ring in which the competition is going to be held. The location of the show secretariat and where they are expecting the majority of the spectators (perhaps even a stand).

A list of the available obstacles and confirmation that all the obstacles comply with the rules.

Which categories and classes are to be judged. How many competitors he/she has to judge in each class.

How many people will be helping in the ring.

Timetable.

Whether timekeeping is manual or electronic.

Whether start and finish are separate.

In addition: whether copies of the course plans should be made available by the judge.

The course plan should only be given to the helpers one hour before the competition.

6. Course building and briefing the ring stewards

The agility judge always supervises course building personally.

After the briefing and after the course has been walked, no changes are allowed to the course or the course time (Maximum Course Time as well as the Standard Course Time) once this has been announced by the judge.

The stewards and helpers should be fully briefed as to what is required of them. The briefing can be less elaborate or even left up to the organisation if the organisers and helpers are experienced.

Important: The scribe or the timekeeper cannot be replaced until the class is finished.

The ring stewards and show officials should be briefed about the following:

1. Scribe

- How the judge will indicate faults, refusals and eliminations.
- How a judging slip should be filled in.
- Always to watch the judge never the dog and continue to watch until the judge stops judging the dog.
- Where the judge will be positioned on the course during the runs.
- Where the scribe should be positioned so he/she can always see the judge – move if necessary.
- How he/she will indicate to the judge that there have been three refusals.

2. Show secretariat (scorer)

- How the score sheet should be filled in.
- That the agility judge will check the scoring during the competition.
- That during the competition the score sheet must always show the latest results.
- That judging slips should be kept in the running order.
- That the judge must be informed immediately should a problem arise.

3. Collecting ring steward

- That he/she is responsible for insuring that the running order is respected.
- That there should always be 3 to 5 dogs and handlers near the start.
- That he/she should indicate non-starters on his/her list next to the names of the competitors.
- The judge will explain precisely when he/she wants the next dog and handler to enter the ring.

4. Time keeper

- Explain when the time should be started and stopped.
- Explain that the time should start;
 - by jumping the first hurdle
 - by going underneath the first hurdle
 - by passing the start line on the first hurdle's left or right side
- That the time should **never** be stopped before the dog has crossed the finish line (except when the dog has been eliminated).
- The time is stopped when the dog negotiates the last hurdle correctly. This means that the dog jumps from the correct side (no matter if the pole is knocked down – fault!). The course is not yet finished and the time is not yet to be stopped when the dog goes underneath the last hurdle or the dog passes the last hurdle on the left or the right side.
- That time given to the scribe should always be to the 1/100th of a second.
- That he/she can release the dog from the start line after the judge's signal.
- If a dog exceeds the Maximum Course Time then the timekeeper should blow a whistle.
- The time must be taken from the same position at the start and at the finish for each dog.
- That he/she should only reset the stopwatch after he has made sure that the scribe has noted the time (show the scribe the watch so she/he can copy the time down on the judging slip).
- The manual time always counts when the electronic time fails.

5. Ring steward

- Should straighten the collapsible tunnel and check the collapsible tyre after each dog has run.
- Ensure that the assigned obstacles are checked so they are exactly the same for each dog.
- That the height of the jumps is the same for each dog.
- That they cannot give up their allocated assignment before the class is finished.

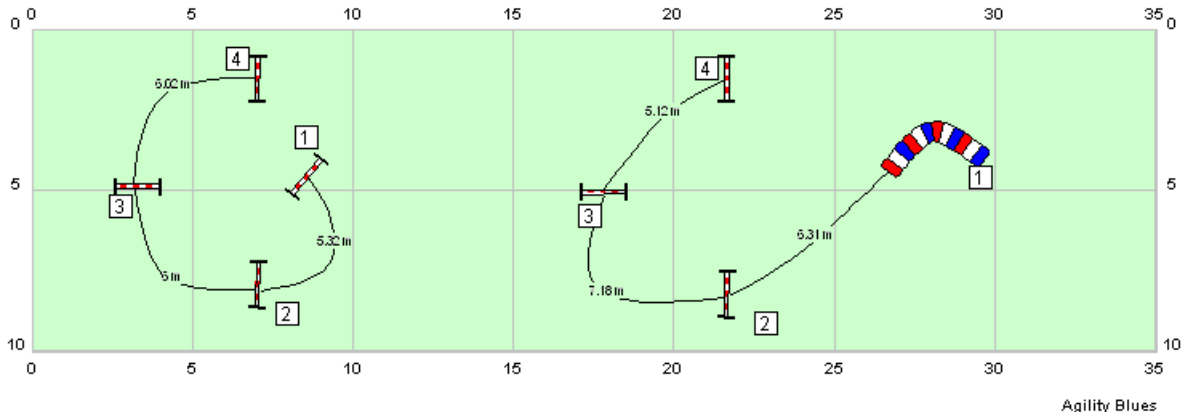
6. Briefing the competitors

The judge should:

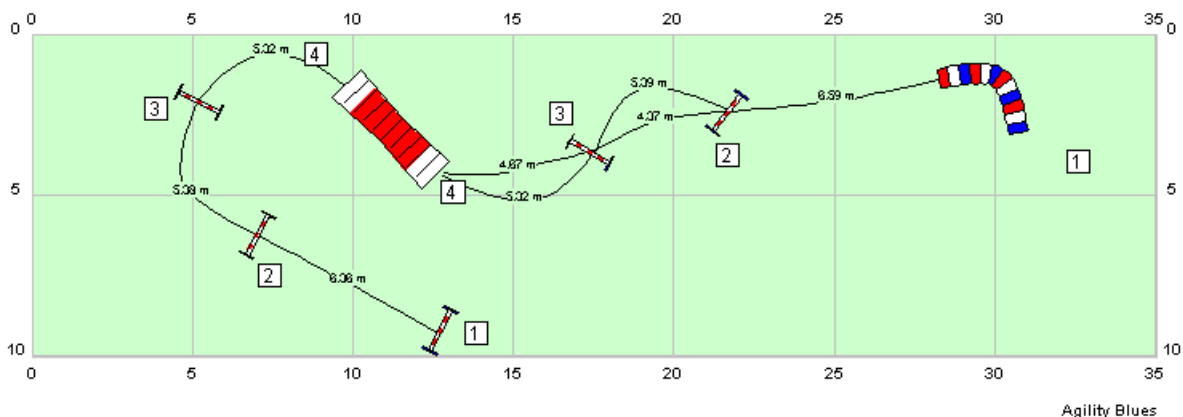
- Ascertain if any translation is necessary.
- Tell the handlers what the length of the course is and also the Standard and Maximum Course Time.
- Indicate how the start signal will be given.
- Indicate how faults, refusals and eliminations will be indicated and what happens after elimination.
- Remind handlers that they must continue their run unless the judge tells them to stop.

7. Course design

1. The course plan should be drawn to scale and must be available, possibly with copies, on the day of the competition.
2. The distance between the obstacles should be 5 to 7 metres (small 4-7 m.).
The distances should be measured along the line most dogs will take, not the line the judge would prefer the dogs to take in order to keep the distances according to the rules (between 5-7 m., small 4-7 m.)



The sequence 2-3-4 is exactly the same in both situations, but because of another approach to number 2 and the speed of the dog being higher, the distance between 2-3 and 3-4 is not the same. The difference in speed and approach changes the line of the dog about one metre between 2-3 and 3-4.



The sequence 3-4 is exactly the same from the left as from the right. The distance and angle 2-3 is the same.

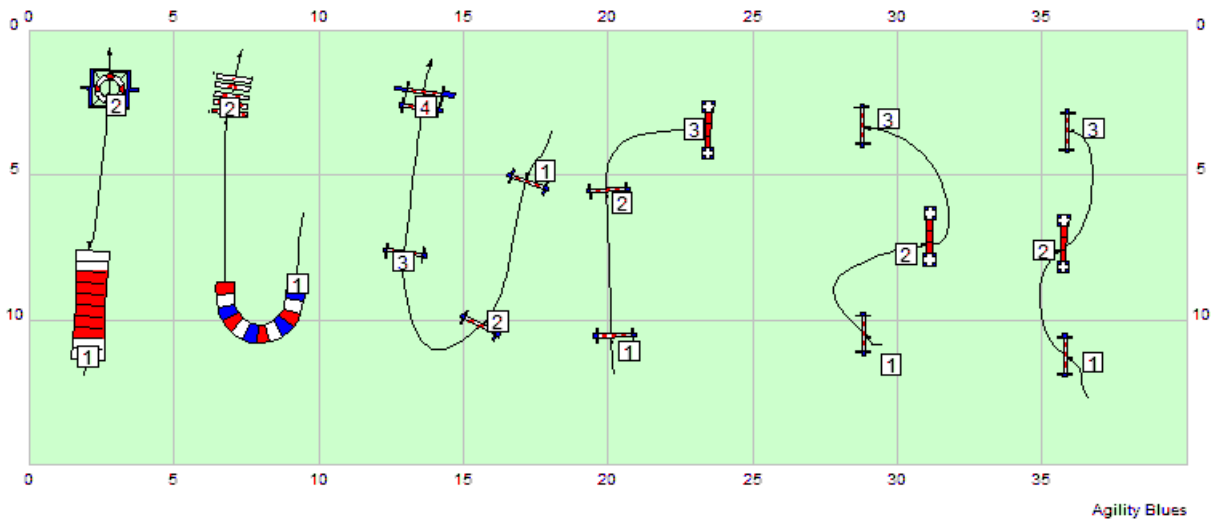
Starting on the left, the distance between all obstacles is according to the rules.

Starting on the right, the judge could measure the distances - and stay within the rules - if he/she follows the same line he/she followed when starting on the left. Most dogs, however, will follow a line where the distances are shorter than stipulated in the rules. The situation is possibly dangerous because the dogs will attempt the A-frame with great speed and only a short distance to prepare for the A-frame (A-frame in an angled approach).

3. The first and last obstacle should always be a hurdle.
4. For safety, the dog should have a straight approach to the long jump, tyre, and spread jump. The approach and the speed of the dog should also be taken into consideration with the contact obstacles.

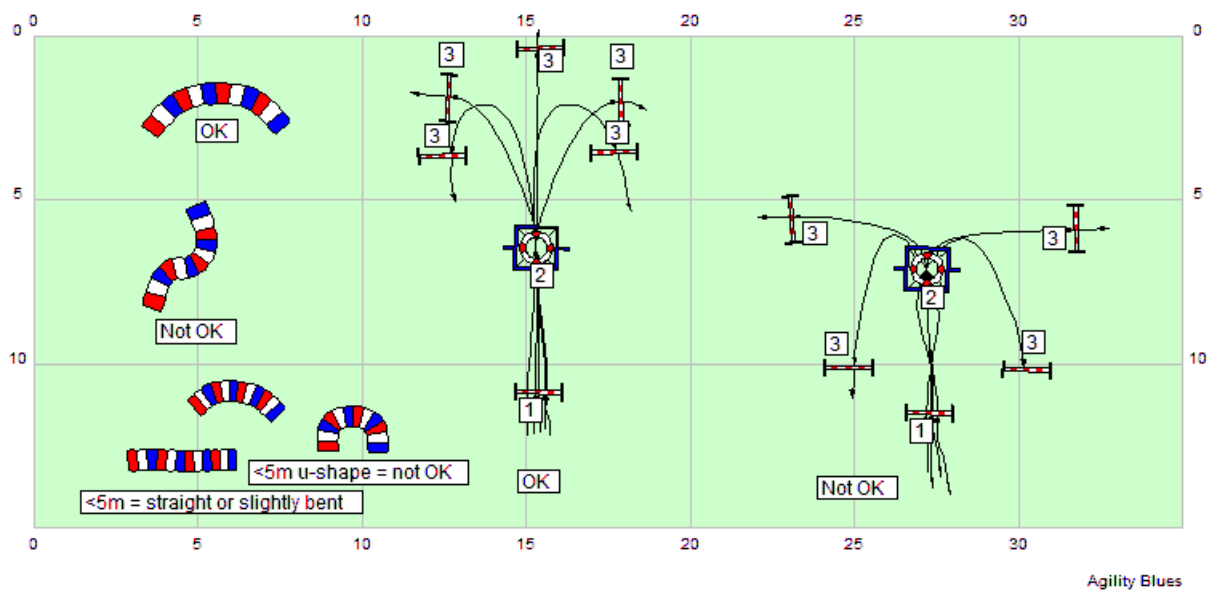
5. For safety, the wall/viaduct has to be placed in a way that there is no danger for the dog to hit the tower in his jumping direction, tight turns towards the wall/viaduct should be avoided.

6. Straight approaches on all obstacles that should have a straight approach



1. Straight approach to the tyre from a contact = OK
 2. Straight approach to the long jump from a tunnel = OK
Two very clear situations
 3. Straight approach from 3 to the spread, the dog already has a straight approach to the spread while it is jumping 3 (line from the landing point to 3 gives the dog the straight approach)
 4. Approach to the wall = OK
 5. The line from the landing point to 2 results in a safe approach to the wall = OK
 6. In this situation (serpentine) the line from the landing point after 1 to 2 is too tight an approach to the wall = danger for the dog to hit the tower.
- Thinking about the approaches to the obstacles which should have a straight approach: you have to think about the approach AND the speed of the dog from the previous obstacle.

7. Tube Tunnel / Tyre



Tube Tunnel can only be bent in one direction = NO S-shapes.
Tunnels shorter than 5 m should not have a turn of more than 90° (examples on the left).
Avoid tight turns after the tyre.
In the middle OK.
On the right turns are too tight.

8. Be aware that handlers must have the possibility to pass each obstacle on both sides. Tunnel underneath the dog walk or A-frame is the only exception.

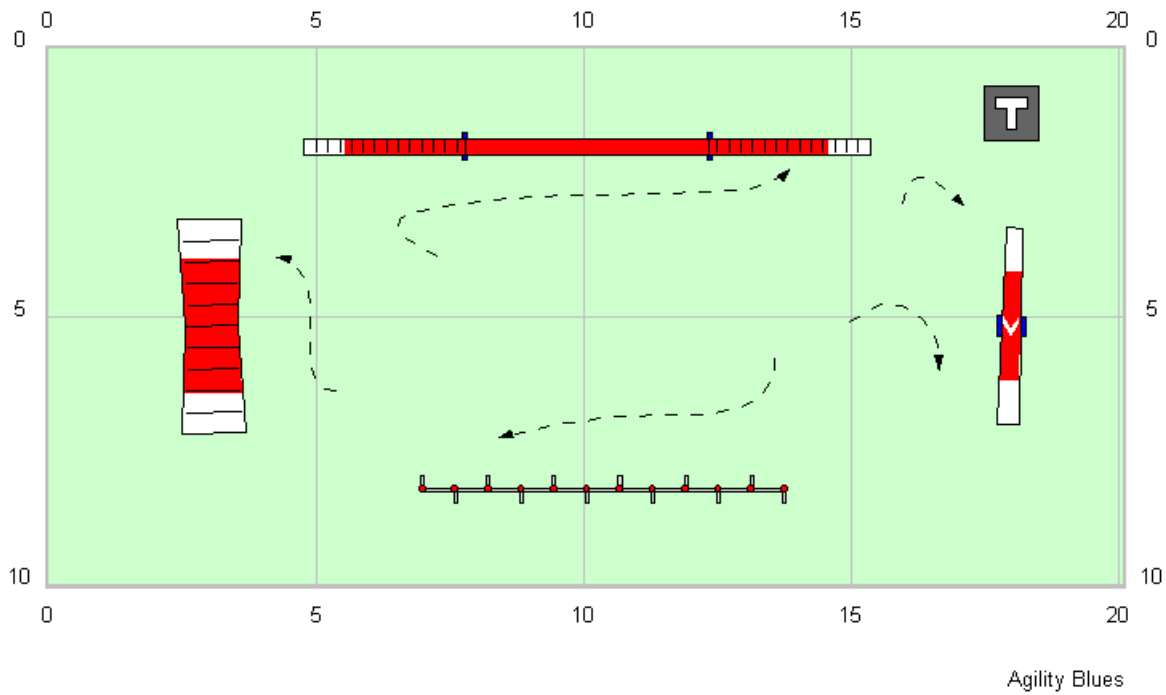
9. A judge should be aware about angled approaches to the collapsible tunnel.

10. Classifying the obstacles as:

Prime obstacles

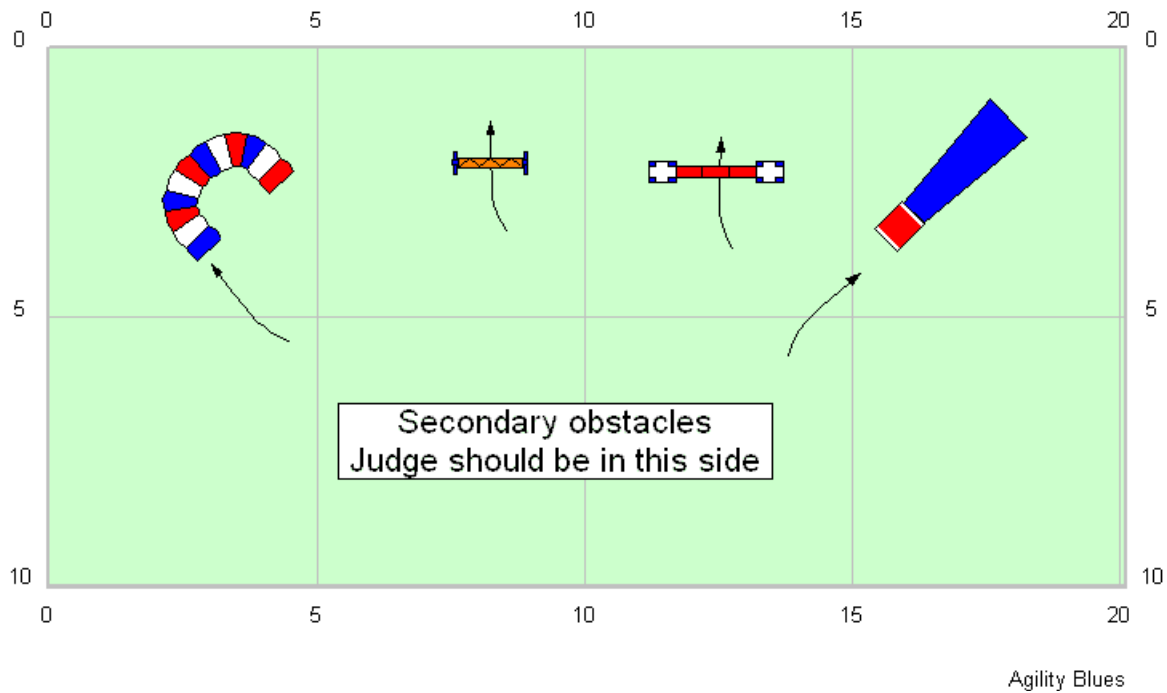
A-ramp - Dog walk - See Saw – Weave – Table

The judge should always try to be close enough to the dog as it negotiates these obstacles (without being in the way of the handler).



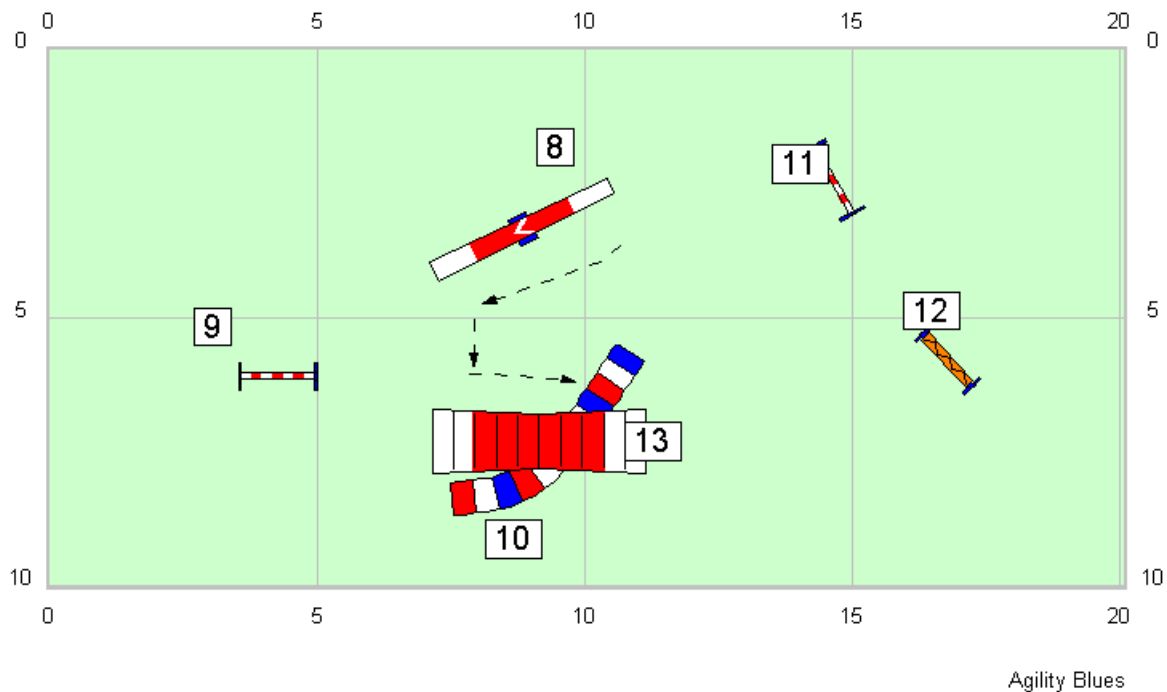
Secondary obstacles

Tube tunnel - Collapsible tunnel - Tyre - Long jump - Brush fence - Wall - Fence with a solid panel



With these obstacles, the judge should make sure that he/she is in the correct position to see any run by, run out or incorrect entry.

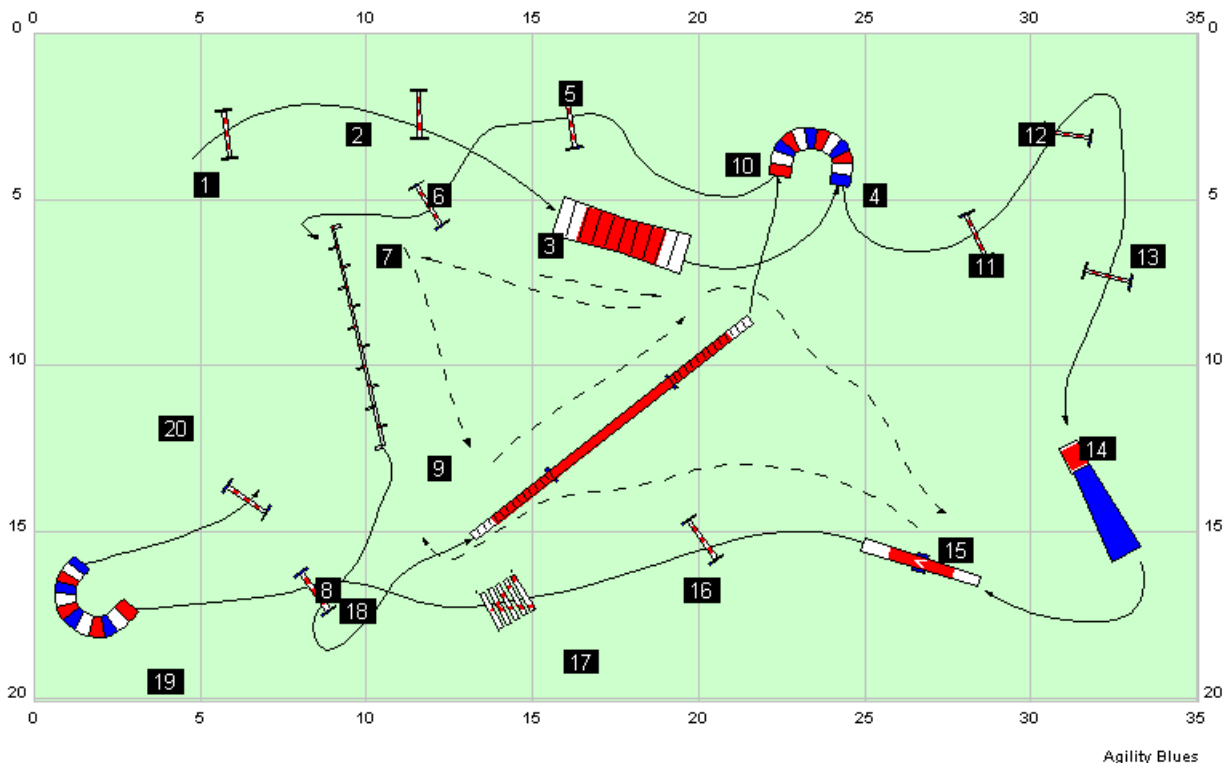
Difficulty with secondary obstacles in the course



Judge cannot see the tunnel entry, cannot see the refusal at the brush jump 12

Other obstacles

Single hurdles or spread jumps do not pose particular problems for the judge. The judge should be aware to be on a slight angle to these obstacles so he/she can see the poles knocked down or possible refusals.



Judge waits along the primary obstacle 3, seeing the contacts, waits till the dog enters the tunnel, moves to the correct angle to see the weave entry, follows the dog to the dog walk, waits at the up contact and moves with the dog to the down contact. Judge waits till the dog enters the tunnel and moves (while the dog is negotiating 11-14) to 14-15 (checking the collapsible tunnel entry) and looks at the last primary obstacle 15, moves slowly to the triangle 7-9 and sees the dog entering the tunnel 19.

11. Guidelines

- While judging the dog, the course design should allow the judge to do this at a normal pace. Also besides the dog walk, it is much harder to focus the contacts while running.
- It should never look like the agility judge cannot cope with the speed of the dog.
- The course should have the right degree of difficulty. A course should be fluent and traps are to be avoided.

Trap = the obstacle the dog is not supposed to take is too close to the one the dog has to negotiate.

12. The following should be avoided:

- Using the table early on in the course or near the end; ideal is placing the table halfway around the course.
- Placing 2 prime obstacles one after the other (except for the table).
- Using fences more than once if there is no time to put them back up when they are knocked down.
- Sharp turns in the course, which turn the handler into the judge's path – particularly after contact obstacles and weave.
- Spread jumps and wall/viaduct used more than once in a course.
- Less than 6 (with prime obstacles) or 8 (without prime obstacles) obstacles between the 1st and the 2nd time a hurdle is used.

8. Course building

1. Only use obstacles described in the Rules (also in non official classes).

2. For the safety of the dog the judge should inspect the obstacles to make sure they are not dangerous. Faulty obstacles must not be used.

3. The hurdles should have as few poles as possible. The spread jump should have a single pole at the front and at the back.

4. The poles marking the corners of the long jump are placed in such a way that they can be put back in exactly the same position if they are knocked down.

5. The numbers should be placed so that they do not hinder dog or handler during their run.

6. Before the briefing the agility judge makes sure that:

- The course is what he/she expected.
- It does resemble the design.
- All the obstacles are firmly placed and pegged down.

7. Before the first dog starts, the agility judge makes sure that:

- All the helpers are correctly briefed and that they are where they are supposed to be.
- All the obstacles are put up correctly.

8. Poles that mark the start and finish should be placed in such a way that the dog has no other choice than to pass between them.

9. A course should be designed and built so that:

- It contains no traps.
- It is fun to watch for the spectators.
- It can be judged without problems.
- The course flows fluently, even for the more advanced classes (the course time can also be a degree of difficulty).

10. Time is saved when:

- The table is not used.
- The course is shortened.
- The exit is used optimally so the next dog can start sooner.
- There is a separate start and finish (have someone place the lead near the end).
- The scribe and time keeper are positioned near each other.
- The start- and finish-hurdle are close to the entry/exit of the ring
- The course design prevents the handler from going too far ahead before starting the dog.

9. Standard Course Time and Maximum Course Time

1. To work out the Standard Course Time, the agility judge must first know the exact length of the course. A measuring wheel is recommended to determine the length of the course (the most precise method).

The judge should measure the ideal line that the dog will use when it negotiates the course. This means that alternately the inside and the outside line is measured. Ideally measurement would be from the centre of each obstacle.

2. When assessing the Standard Course Time the following should be taken into consideration:

- The nature of the competition.
- The degree of difficulty
- The weather conditions
- The condition of the floor

10. Judging

The judge is responsible for what happens in his/her ring and he/she should make sure that everything goes as smoothly as possible.

Handlers can bring their dogs in the ring without lead and collar if the handler is in control of the dog. The performance of each dog should be judged correctly – in order to do so the judge must always move into the right position on the course. However, the judge's position should not interfere with the dog or the handler.

It is always a good idea to go over your judging path a few times before the start of the competition.

Make sure you do not cross in front of the dog or the handler as they are coming toward you.

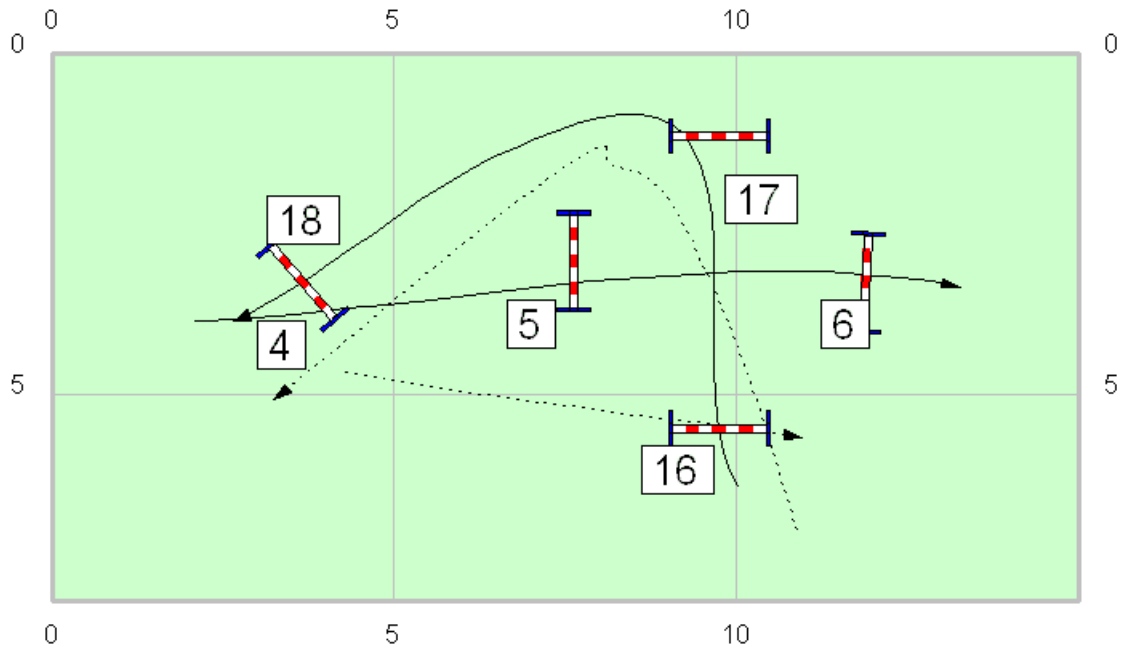
The position of the scribe should allow her/him to see the judge at all times. However the scribe can be told to move if necessary. If the judge should temporarily be out of sight of the scribe because of an obstacle such as the A-frame, then the judge should hold up her/his arm up long enough to make sure that the scribe has seen the signal.

The judge should never take her/his eyes off the dog as long as it is in the ring, even after it has been eliminated.

11. Judging specific obstacles

Hurdle:

- It is a fault when the dog displaces a pole so that it is no longer at the original height (a pole does not have to fall to the ground to be faulted).
- Examples:
 - Dog knocks down 4 = fault
Not an elimination, even if the wing falls down, whether there is enough time to rebuild it or not.
 - Handler knocks down 16, while dog is jumping 6 = Elimination
 - Handler knocks down 16, while dog is jumping 17 = Fault (for touching the obstacle)



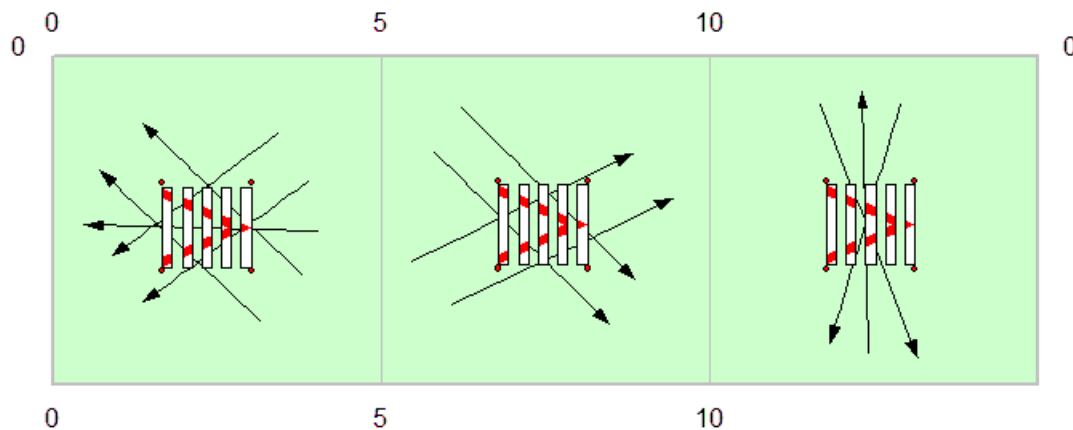
Agility Blues

Contact obstacles:

- A judge should concentrate on the contact zone to assess whether the dog puts a paw on it. This method is better than concentrating on the dog, where a back paw in the contact zone could be missed as the dog alights from the obstacle.
- A dog is considered to have left the obstacle when all 4 paws are on the ground.
- A dog cannot be faulted for stopping, backing up, turning or going in the wrong direction as long as the dog is on the obstacle. The dog must, of course, complete the obstacle correctly.
- A dog can be stopped in the contact zone, even partially on the ground and partially on the obstacle.
- Once the dog has left the obstacle, i.e. touching the ground with all 4 paws, it is eliminated if it puts a paw back on the obstacle.

Long jump:

- The marker poles at the four corners of the long jump are only a judging aid. They help determine whether the dog has negotiated the obstacle correctly. It is therefore not faulted when a dog or the handler touches or knocks down one of these poles, even when this causes one of the units to fall down.



Agility Blues

Examples: Eliminations - Refusals

1. The dog jumps in and out of the long jump in the wrong direction = E
2. The dog jumps in and out of the long jump in the right direction = R
3. The dog jumps in and out of the long jump from side to side = R

Walking/Jumping onto the Long Jump:

If the dog walks/trots onto elements of the long jump = R

If the dog jumps onto elements of the long jump = F

Weaving poles

If the dog leaves the line which would allow for continuous forward movement = F

Eliminations

Description of "leaving the ring":

- Dog found something outside the ring which is obviously more attractive for him than to stay inside
- Handler tried several times to call his dog, but without success

Table

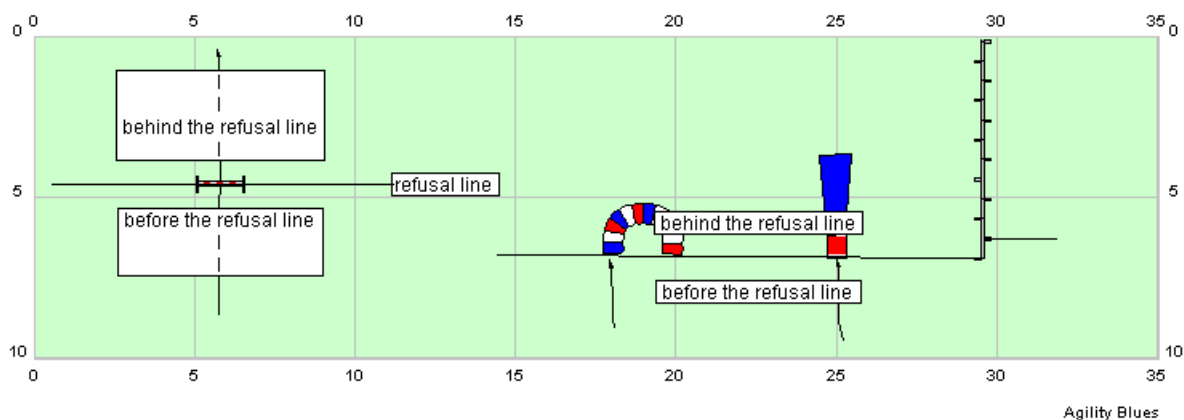
- The dog should be on the table with four paws. While it is on the table the table should only support it.

Refusal: A dog that is faulted with a refusal for standing still on the course should not be faulted with another refusal until it has taken at least another step.

12. Faults on specific obstacles

Refusals and subsequent marking

Definitions



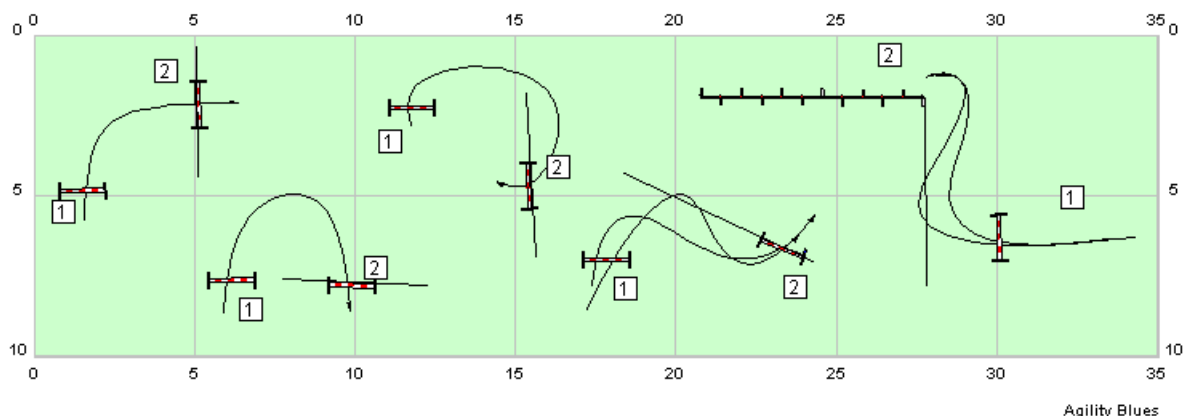
You can separate the area around an obstacle:

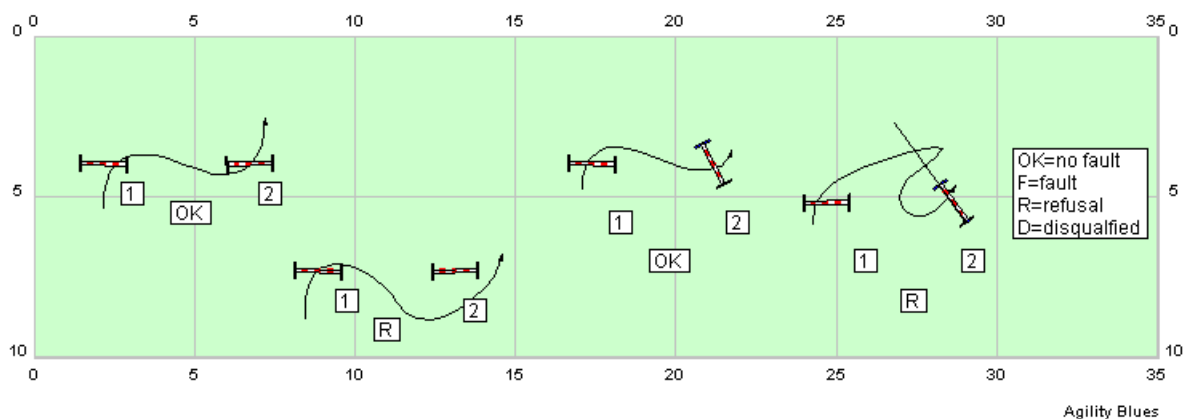
Split them into two areas by a line, the refusal line (RL) following a straight line from the approach side of the obstacle. The side from where the dog should approach the obstacle is called 'before the refusal line'. The other side is called 'behind the refusal line'.

If the dog starts before the refusal line (RL), it is not allowed to pass this refusal line (RL) or it will be faulted with a refusal.

If the dog starts behind the refusal line (RL), it has to pass the refusal line (RL) once. The dog will be faulted with a refusal if it passes this line more than once without negotiating the obstacle.

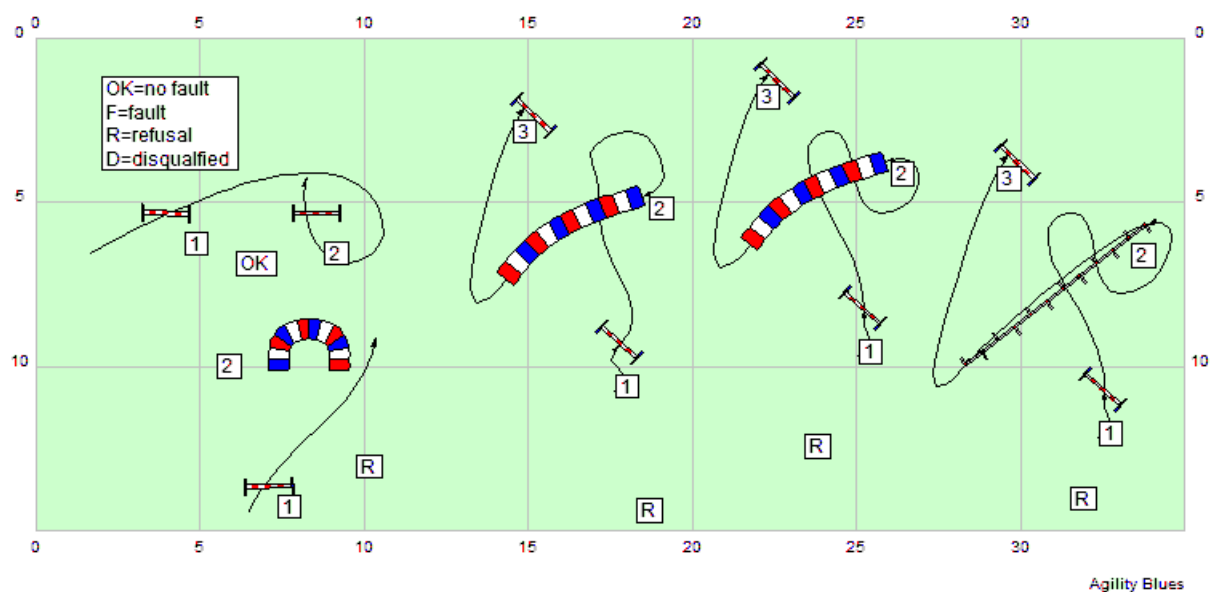
A judge has to be careful when designing her/his course and not take the dog too close to the RL while it is negotiating the course. It only makes it more difficult to decide whether or not it is a refusal.





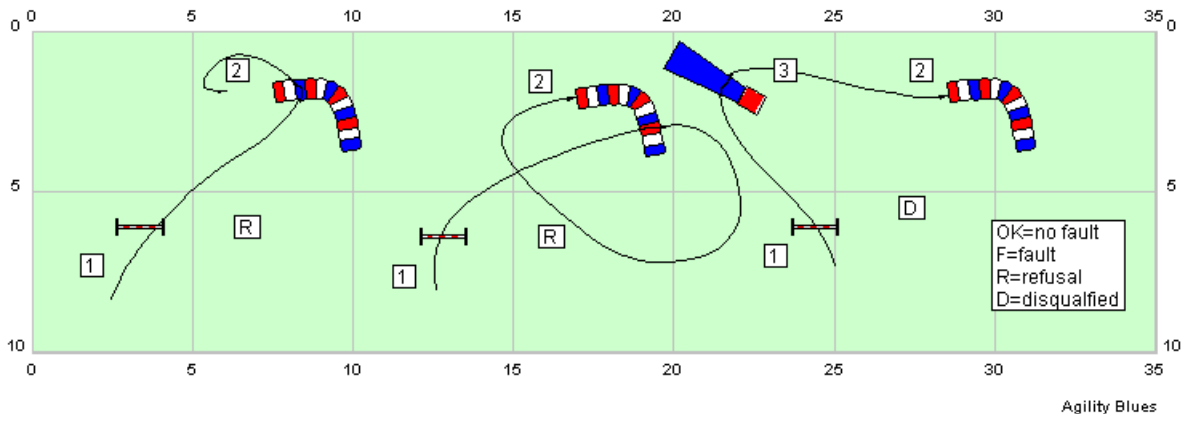
Examples:

1. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line just once = OK
2. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line more than once = R
3. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, not passing this line = OK
4. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once = R



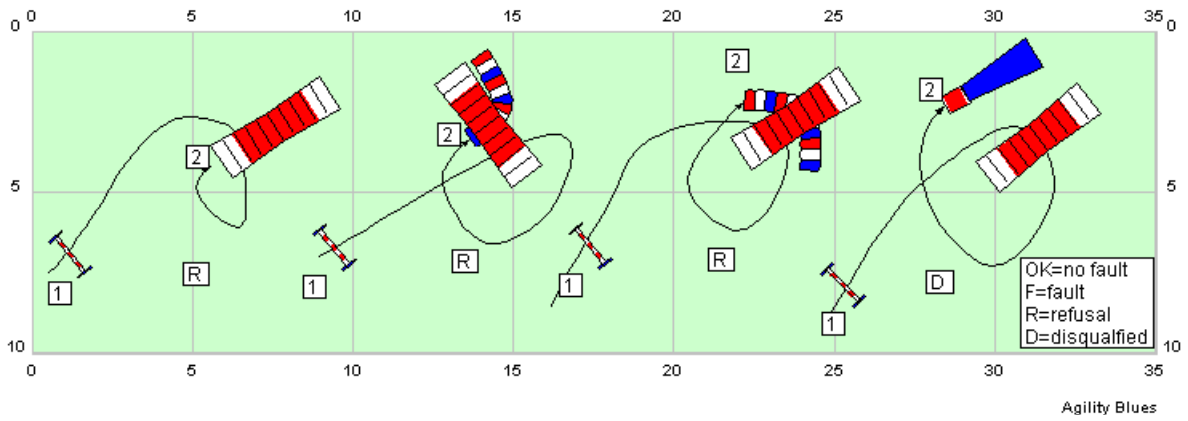
Examples:

1. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line just once = OK
2. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once = R
3. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, jumping over the next obstacle once, entering the next obstacle (tunnel) = R (not an D for a wrong course)
4. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, jumping over the next obstacle twice, entering the next obstacle (tunnel) = R (not an D for a wrong course)
5. Dog lands behind the RL of the next obstacle, jumping over the next obstacle once, entering the next obstacle (weaving poles) = R (not an D for a wrong course)



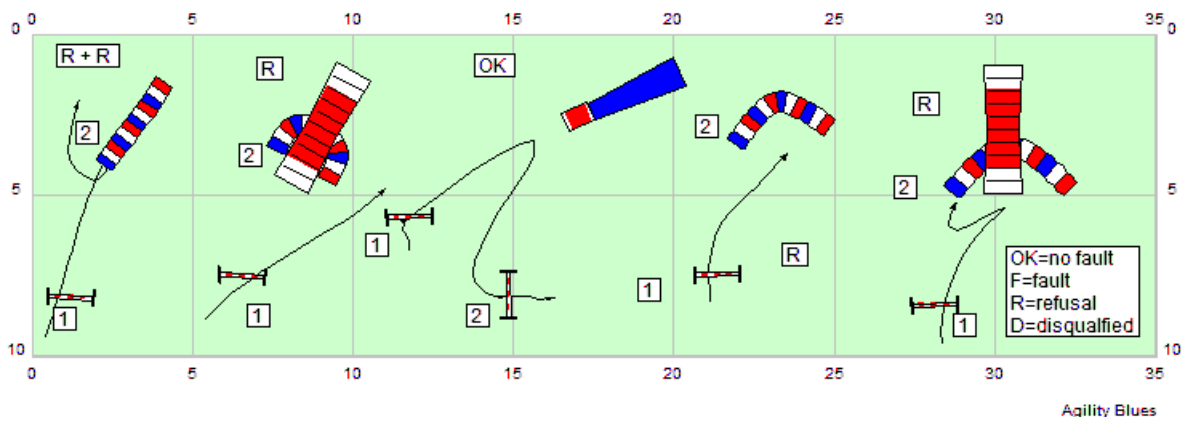
Examples:

1. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once, jumping over the obstacle it should take = R (no D)
2. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once, jumping over the obstacle it should take = R (no D)
3. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, jumping over the obstacle it is not allowed to take = D



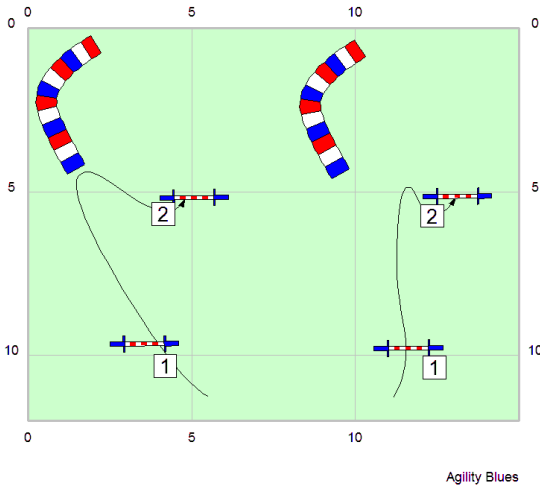
Examples:

1. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once, going under the obstacle it should take = R (no D)
2. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once, going under an obstacle it is not allowed to take - but in this situation, created by the judge, he cannot avoid it = R (no D)
3. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once, going under an obstacle it is not allowed to take - but in this situation, created by the judge he can't avoid it = R (no D)
4. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, going under an obstacle it is not allowed to take = D



Examples:

1. Dog goes correctly in the tunnel, come back (1st R), passing the RL of the tunnel (2nd R) = R + R
2. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once = R
3. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once by trying to go to the wrong obstacle = OK (when the dog passes the RL it has not seen the obstacle it is supposed to negotiate next)
4. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once = R
5. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once by going to the A-frame = R (The dog sees the tunnel during going to the A-frame)



Examples:

Refusal with/without going for the wrong obstacle.

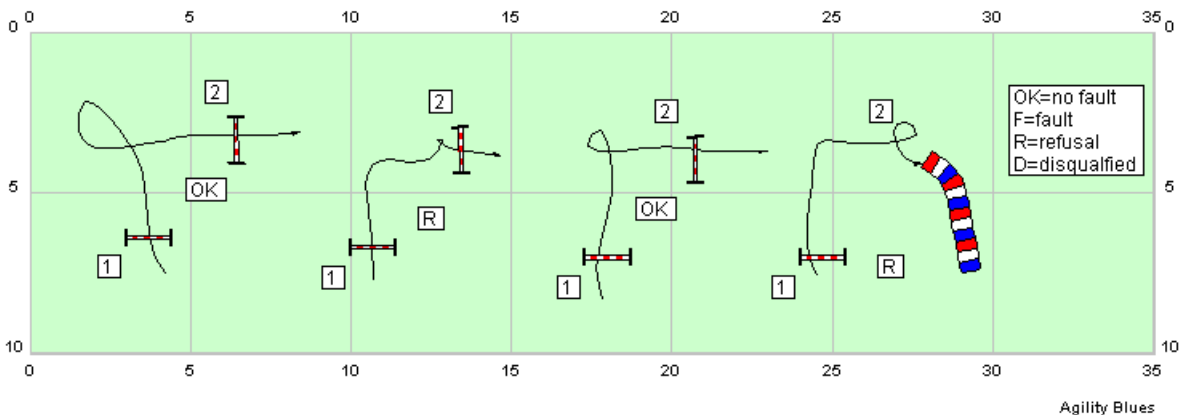
1. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once while the dog is not in an area where he can go for the right obstacle = OK
2. Dog lands before the RL of the next obstacle, passing this line once = R

These 2 situations are clear, Situation 1 = OK, 2 = R

All situations in between have to be decided by the judge at that moment.

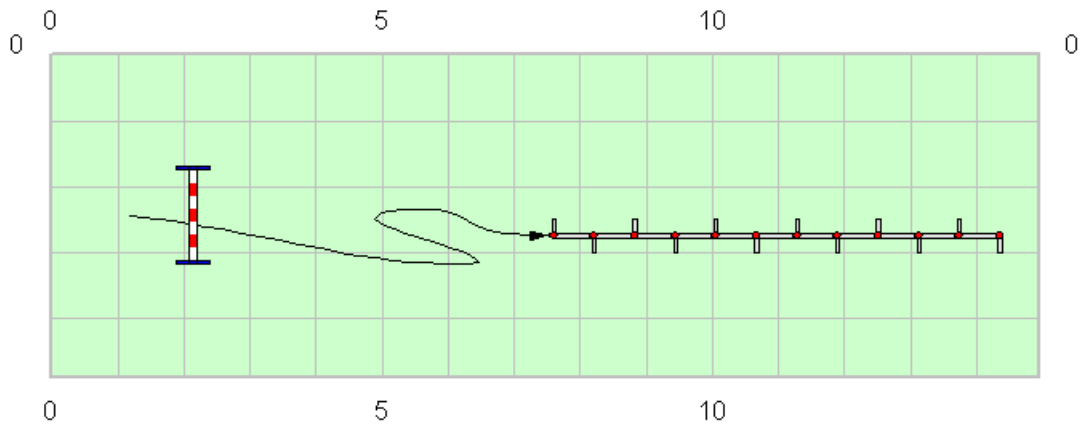
If a dog stands still or turns around in the take off area, the dog will be faulted with a refusal.

The 'take off' area depends on the size of the dog. Short striding dogs automatically have smaller areas 'to take off' than long striding dogs. It is up to the judge to decide there and then. When the dog turns and the judge thinks "why did the dog not take off", then it should be faulted with a refusal.



Examples:

1. The dog turns in an area where it cannot take off for hurdle 2 = OK
2. The dog turns in the area where it should take off = R
3. The dog turns in an area where it cannot take off for hurdle 2 = OK
4. The dog turns in the area where it should go into the tunnel (take off) = R



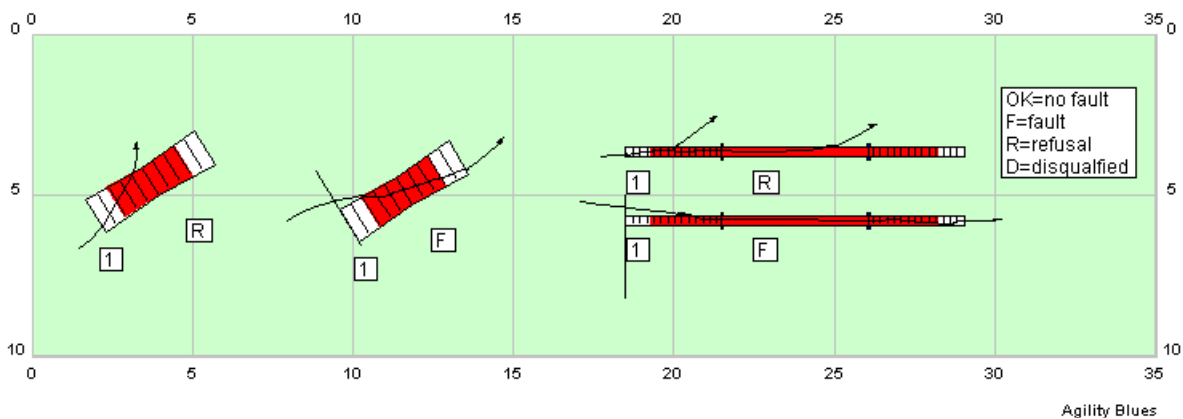
Agility Blues

The dog turns back in the area where it should enter the weaving poles (take off) = R

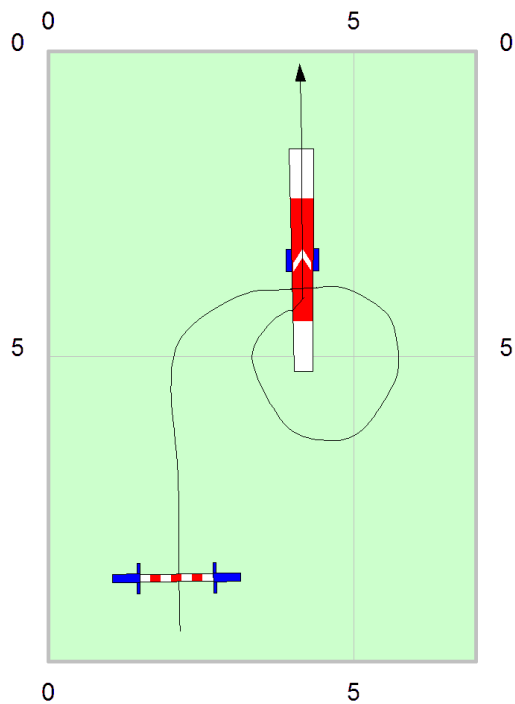
Contacts, refusals and faults

Dividing contact obstacles into areas before and behind the RL does not really work because the situation is somewhat different. Even when the dog is behind the RL it is still able to get on the obstacle – in which case, if the dog touches the up contact, it should not be faulted.

Here are some examples:



1. Touching the up contact, leaving the A-frame before the middle = R
2. Passing the RL, getting onto the A-frame but missing the up contact = F
3. Touching the up contact, leaving the dog walk on the up or horizontal plank = R
4. Passing the RL, getting onto the dog walk but missing the up contact = F



Agility Blues

Example

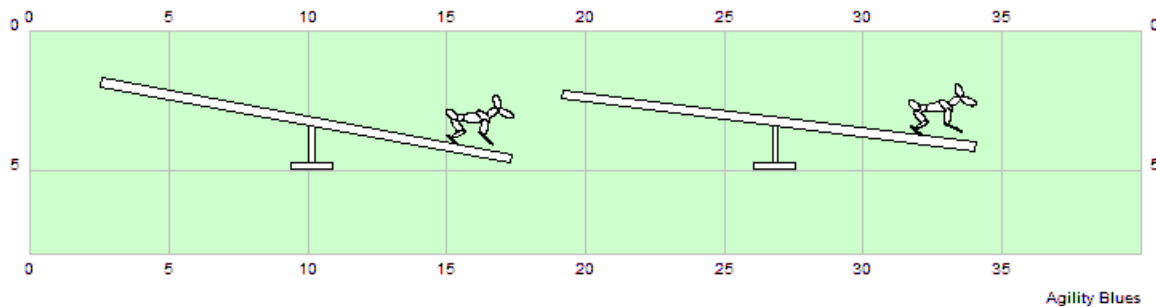
1. Dog passes the upside of the seesaw, jumps on the upper side plank of the seesaw, jumps off on the other side of the plank, runs around the upper side, misses the up contact and negotiates the rest of the seesaw. = F + R + F

2. If the dog does not touch the upper plank the first time. = R + F

Judging a flyer off the seesaw

Judging flyers is not very easy.

Definition of leaving the seesaw; legs in the air, there is no paw contact whatsoever.



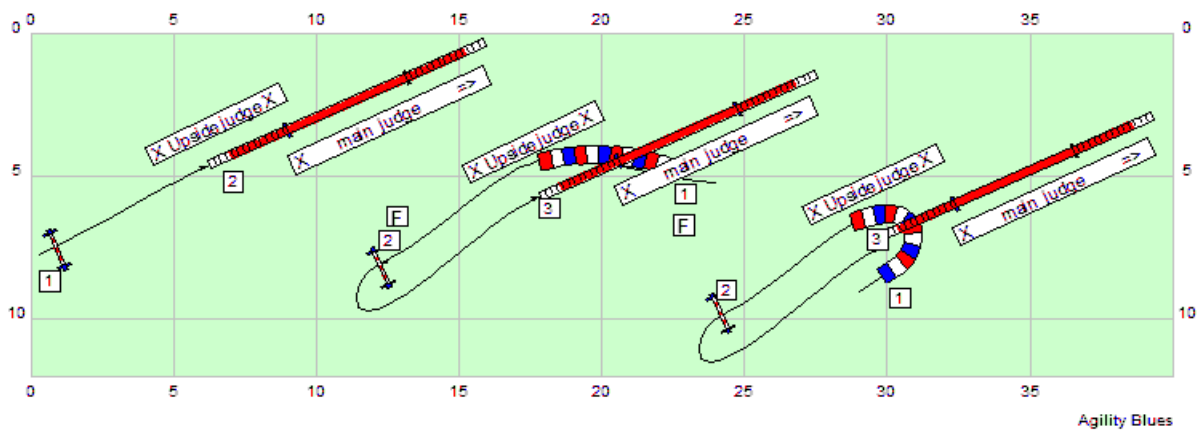
Agility Blues

1. The seesaw just before touching the ground: the dog pushes the seesaw to the ground, there is, however, still contact with from the rear paws when the seesaw touches the ground = OK

2. This situation is more difficult to judge. The dog is pushing the seesaw down as well, but you cannot be sure, if the seesaw really touches the ground before the last rear paw loses contact with the seesaw. So give the dog the benefit of the doubt.

Second judge at the upside of the dog walk

If an assistant judge is acting in the course he is not allowed to judge anything else but the up contact of the dog walk (and the immediate area around the upside of the dog walk while the dog is approaching the dog walk in the running order, if needed / see example).



If there is an assistant (second judge) judging the up contact on the dog walk, both judges have to be clear on who is judging what:

1. The area where the assistant judge is responsible for judging the contact area, touching of the dog/obstacle and refusals – this until the dog is on the horizontal plank with 4 paws.
2. In this situation, the assistant is also watching the exit of obstacle 1 (tunnel - including eliminating the dog, if it should go in the tunnel instead of obstacle 3, dog walk)
3. If the tunnel is positioned in a U-shape, as in example 3, the assistant judge should then also judge the entry of the tunnel as well as the previously mentioned points.

Start sequence

The dog refuses the 1st obstacle, handler and dog moves back, dog stops his natural movement (by influence of the handler) = D

4. Rerun

When a rerun is necessary, the following points should be noted:

1. The faults incurred before the dog has been stopped will count.
2. Judging will recommence at the point, where the dog had been stopped.
3. The course should be done in the correct sequence and to the best of the competitor's ability.
4. The judge can still decide to fault the dog if he feels that the handler is not doing the rerun to the best of his ability.

These Guidelines were approved by the FCI General Committee in Bucharest, October 2012.