

MEASURING UP

CANTERBURY CANINE AGILITY TRAINING SOCIETY (CCATS)

Ready to start competing? Or just want to make sure your dog is jumping the correct height at training? Your dog will need to be measured for agility before they start to compete at 18 months old-- and again for a final measure at 2 years old.

The measure is important as it will dictate how high your dog will have to jump. It is important that your dog is measured correctly so that they don't jump too high or too low.



GETTING STARTED

HOW DOGS ARE MEASURED FOR AGILITY

When a measurement is taken, a measuring stick is placed over the dog's withers (the point of the dog's back over the top of the shoulder blades, which is the highest point of the front leg). This spot is used, as the withers are stationary even when a dog's neck moves up and down.



If the measure is taken from the neck in front of the withers, the measure could be tall and if taken from the back below the withers the measure could be short. Two certified measurers will take turns measuring your dog.

They will each take 3-6 measures and then will record your dog's height, give you a certificate and send the details to the NZAC database.

THE PERFECT STAND

IT'S ALL IN THE STANCE...

In order to obtain a measure, your dog will need to stand in a shape that resembles a square/rectangle.

This means that if a line was drawn on the ground between their four feet it would look like a square or rectangle.

Their forelegs should be directly under their body, straight and perpendicular to the ground. The hindlegs are placed under their hindquarters, and their hocks should be straight and perpendicular to the ground. The head is about level with the line of the back. You can hold your dog's head but don't force your dog to stand up, they must support their own weight evenly.







PREPARING YOUR DOG

GETTING YOUR DOG COMFORTABLE WITH THE PROCESS...

If your dog is not comfortable during the measuring process, it will be more difficult for the measurers to get an accurate measure.

Your dog might lean away or fiddle with their feet, go tense and stand tall, or cringe and measure short. This will result in a protracted and difficult measuring session. A relaxed dog will measure accurately and the measuring session will be short and easy.






As part of the measuring process, your dog will need to...

-  Stand still for a reasonable period of time (up to a few minutes)
-  Maintain a correct stance with all four legs square.
-  Be comfortable being touched by strangers
-  Be comfortable with a stick being placed nearby, over their heads, and touching them



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR DOG

AS A HANDLER, IT IS HELPFUL IF YOU DO THE FOLLOWING...

-  Teach your dog strangers are OK
-  Have a variety of people touch your dog from puppyhood
-  Ensure that being handled is reinforced as fun-- provide lots of food rewards
-  Practice standing your puppy from an early age, and reward them for being still
-  Ensure the introduction of a measuring stick is not scary, but something that precedes a food reward

A relaxed dog will only need a few measures, as the measurer will get similar/exact measures whereas a stressed, poorly trained dog will require more measures. This will take longer.

The measures may vary greatly and the measurer will find it difficult to work out what is your dog's true height. If the measurer has made six attempts and is still not satisfied, they should advise you to take your dog away and bring it back when it is more relaxed and able to stand.



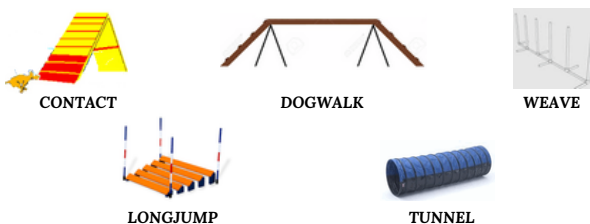
GET YOUR NUMBER...

TO GET A MEASURE, YOU'LL FIRST NEED A PERMANENT NUMBER...

Before your measuring day, you must get a **Permanent Number** through the [NZ Dog Agility](#) website. First up, you need to create an account, and to register yourself online.

Once you have an account, you'll be able to register your dog(s), and apply for your dog to get a permanent agility number by following these steps.

It's free and will save you heaps of time down the track, as this number is what you will use to register your dog in all agility events. **Jot your dog's number down, and bring it on measuring day, as your measurers will need this during your measuring appointment.**



When you go to register your dog, the website will ask you for your dog's height (240, 320, 380, 500, or 600). Put in your best estimate -- the measurers will be able to change this after your dog has been measured.

HOW TO TEACH A SUCCESSFUL STAND

SOME KEY NOTES

If your dog is sitting show them a treat and move it away from their nose, parallel to the ground. The dog should follow the food and stand up. Click (or verbally mark the behaviour if you don't use a clicker) and give your dog a reward.

After some practice the simple act of moving your hand will encourage your dog to stand.

Once your dog will stand when asked, teach them to allow you to place their feet correctly. Take their foot, pick it up, gently place it and say “stand stay”. If your dog doesn't move their foot then click and treat.

Practice this for all 4 feet. Once your dog will stand you can teach them to stand in different places – on the deck, on a table etc. Once they can stand nicely then ask them to rest his head in your hand.



Ideally your dog's head should be about the same level as the back, so that should guide you as to where to hold your hand. Using a clicker this will be easy to teach (it is a hand targeting exercise).

The next step is to add a measuring stick or something similar (a ruler sellotaped at right angles on to a stick for example). Let your dog sniff the stick, and reward.

Then, holding the stick in front of your dog, position them correctly and treat. Move the stick slowly down one side, across their back and down the other side, reward. Move the stick again and stop it, reward. Add a little bit of pressure and reward your dog for staying put.



Once your dog is comfortable then ask others to measure them. Organise a practice measure at club where many dogs may get “pretend” measures by strangers.

Ensure your dog has done some exercise prior to being measured. A dog that has just gotten out of the car is often very excited, stand on the tips of their toes and very unlikely to stand still. Play with the ball a bit or let them work off that full head of steam before bringing them in to be measured-- This may mean that you need to be at the venue well ahead of time, so plan your time accordingly.

WITH A BIT OF PRACTICE, YOU'LL BE READY IN NO TIME-- WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU OUT THERE!