Welcome

The purpose of this presentation is:

1. To present information about changes to the obedience program designed to make it easier and less expensive for clubs to hold trials
2. Clear up misconceptions about what is required to hold an obedience trial
3. Inform about new classes available for clubs to offer and exhibitors to enter
4. Most importantly, discuss the decline in obedience entries and how we can work together to reverse this trend
As many of you may be aware, obedience entries have been on the decline for a number of years.

As members of Member and Licensed clubs, you need to look at what you and your clubs can do to stop the decline and promote interest in obedience.
Obedience entries have continued a steady decline over the past 10 years.

A look at the statistics for the past 5 years demonstrates this fact.

In 2003, there were 2,390 AKC Obedience Trials with a total entry of 139,650.

In 2008 there were 2,480 AKC Obedience Trials, a small increase of 90 trials over 2003, but total entries were 122,076 – a loss of 17,574 entries.
The AKC’s concern about declining entries continues this year as seen by this comparison of the first four months of 2008 compared to the same time period for 2009.

The difference of two fewer events can easily be accounted for – but the loss of 1,177 entries shows a trend that the dog fancy should be worried about.

We need to work together to stop this decline. As we move through this presentation, think of what we can do as individuals, as groups and as the entire American Kennel Club to improve and move obedience forward. What can we do to promote obedience in the future?
Obedience is the foundation for all dog sports - not just competition obedience.

From the conformation stand-stay to the sporting dog in the field, to the control of a fast agility dog, obedience is required of all our dogs.

Today we’re going to talk about how you and your clubs can help promote the importance of obedience.
All clubs that hold obedience trials should be very familiar with Chapters 1 and 2 of the Obedience Regulations.

These sections provide vital information on the actual requirements to hold an obedience trial.
The Obedience Purpose is found on Page 2 of the Regulations and is the explanation of why we have obedience trials.

We forget that the purpose is to train dogs to be well-mannered in all aspects of life – not just in the obedience ring.

“The basic objective of obedience trials … is to recognize dogs that have been trained to behave in the home, in public places and in the presence of other dogs in a manner that will reflect credit on the sport of obedience at all times and under all conditions.”

This is what all owners would like from their dogs. Whether or not they are involved in competition, a well-mannered dog is a joy to be around.

Good manners may be a key to dogs’ future existence and diversity in this country.
A common complaint is how much it costs clubs to hold obedience events.

The AKC hopes that by the end of this presentation you will be connected to ways clubs can cut the cost of obedience and better utilize facilities and judges.

Let’s start with FACILITIES. If we make the comparison of facilities needed to hold obedience to cars, then we have to ask the question:

Do we need to have the most expensive car in the world, which recently sold for $10.9 million? Or are there other models that will meet our needs and be within our budget?

This same question has to be asked when obedience is included in your events.
Obedience exhibitors have asked for and received a 1961 Ferrari California Spider, and there is now an expectation.

Unfortunately, obedience exhibitors have asked for and received the world’s most expensive car – the 1961 California Spider Ferrari – and now there is an expectation.

Obedience has evolved over the past 20 years to a point that exhibitors demand and are provided with an atmosphere void of any distractions, including spectators.

Obedience trials have become a place known to only those exhibiting in obedience and, as with the Ferrari, at an extra cost.
What type of facility do you need to hold an obedience trial?

So what do we actually need in the way of facilities to hold an obedience trial?

Do we need a sterile, golf course environment – void of distractions and challenges?

Or do we work to establish a fun, friendly and nurturing environment that is meant to be enjoyed by all?
Indoor or outdoor level area of sufficient size to accommodate single or multiple rings – as recommended in the AKC Obedience Regulations.

All that is required is…

An indoor or outdoor level area of sufficient size to accommodate single or multiple rings as recommended in the AKC Obedience Regulations.

Chapter 1, Section 32 of the *Obedience Regulations* outlines RING CONDITIONS.
An **indoor ring** should be rectangular and about 40 by 50 feet for all classes.

The Utility ring should never be less than 35 by 50 feet, and the Novice or Open ring should not be less than 30 by 40 feet.

The floor must have firm footing, using rubber or similar non-slip material at least 4 feet wide for the takeoffs and landings of all jumps, unless the judge feels the surface does not require it.
At an outdoor show or trial, the rings should be about 40 by 50 feet.

The ground should be clean and level.

Any grass should be cut short.

For the Open classes, the club and superintendent are responsible for providing a place, approved by the judge, for the handlers to go completely out of sight of their dogs.

If inclement weather at an outdoor show or trial necessitates that judging be moved under shelter, then the ring size requirements may be waived.
Now considering what we just covered and what you may have been told…

Try this True & False Quiz

A hint –

This quiz may cover many of the unwritten rules reportedly needed to hold a successful trial.
Obedience has to be held in its own building, away from any other show activity.

FALSE
Obedience can’t be held within 150 feet of a conformation ring or other dog show activity.

FALSE
Obedience can’t be held adjacent to a grooming area.

FALSE
Obedience rings have to be enclosed by gates.

Could be TRUE OR FALSE

If an obedience trial is held in conjunction with a conformation show, then the ring enclosure must be at least equal to the material used for enclosing the breed rings.
People can’t sit within 10 feet of an obedience ring.

FALSE

How many of you have ever been approached by a well-meaning exhibitor, steward or club member and asked to move away from the ring because you were too close?

Think about the impact this has on a family who came to visit the show – or a new exhibitor. Instead of receiving a friendly greeting, they are made to feel that they are a nuisance.
People can’t talk while watching a dog work in the obedience ring.

FALSE
People can have food and/or eat near an obedience ring.

TRUE
Obedience rings must be matted the entire width and length of the ring.

FALSE

Non-slip footing is only required for the takeoff and landings at jumps - unless the judge feels the surface does not require it.

This concludes the quiz.

Now knowing the correct answers, think about the family who attends their first obedience trial. The first thing they encounter is being confronted because they are too close to a ring, have food near a ring or are talking about the dogs working in the rings.
At the 2006 AKC National Obedience Invitational in Tampa, Fla., the obedience competition had to be moved to the main arena near the conformation rings.

This was announced to the Fancy. Letters and e-mails poured in, advising this was a big mistake and that exhibitors were going to boycott the event.

Well the event came and went. The same number of obedience dogs competed AND the obedience competition drew a large gallery of spectators compared to the sparse crowds at the previous secluded events.

So as you can see, Obedience dogs can work near crowds.
We can create an environment through our show setting and attitude that turns people away from Obedience – or we can create an environment that people want to be a part of – a setting that they feel comfortable in and want to return to.
As of January 1, 2009, scheduling for judges has been modified to assist clubs.

In the past, clubs were required to hire judges for an unlimited entry of exhibitors. This meant if you overloaded a judge by entries, an overload judge was needed.

The other method of ensuring you did not have an overload was to limit a trial by class size.
This chart shows how entries may be received for an event – low for some classes and high for others.

Unfortunately, this meant you had to specify entry limits for each class and inevitably one class would fill with entries being turned away and other classes would not fill, resulting in clubs not making the return on their investment.

As of January 1, 2009, Chapter 1, Section 27 of the Obedience Regulations was changed to allow clubs to hire and schedule judges by the hour. This change fell in line with conformation.
If a club anticipates an entry to exceed the capacity of its facilities, it may limit entries, not to exceed up to eight hours of judging time per day, per judge. Non-regular classes may be included, if so desired.

Prominent announcement of such limits will appear on the title or cover page of the premium list for an obedience trial or immediately under the obedience heading in the premium list for a dog show.

This announcement must state that entries in one or more specified classes will automatically close when certain limits have been reached, even if this occurs before the official closing date.

Allowing clubs to limit entries based on hours should offer more flexibility and the use of fewer judges, with the option to hire additional in overload situations. Additionally, scheduling a judge who may be multitasking for the club should be easier.

If you are going to limit based on the number of dogs per hour, be sure to discuss the judge’s individual judging rate. You may have to adjust your calculations so you don’t run late into the evening exceeding the judges’ personal rate.
Entries for Obedience classes are based on the following recommended hourly judging rates.

Regular Obedience Class judging rates can be found in Chapter 1, Sections 26 and 27. Optional Titling Class rates can be found in their respective chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Keep in mind that if you limit entries by judging hours, entries have to be added as received and cannot be stockpiled.

In addition to scheduling of judges, clubs should give a lot of thought on who they hire to make the initial contact with new exhibitors in our sport. Think back to the judges who impressed you most – the ones that made competing a positive experience regardless of how your dog did in the ring. These are the judges that clubs should be hiring to help bring new exhibitors into our sport – and make trials pleasurable for everyone to attend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Rates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Novice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Open</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versatility</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As of Jan. 1, 2009, AKC changed three non-regular classes to Optional Titling classes.

These are optional for clubs to offer and optional for exhibitors to enter – but they now offer the extra incentive of earning a title and we all know exhibitors love to earn new and more titles on their dogs.

These classes give clubs with low obedience entries an option for exhibitors to enter more classes at events and exhibitors a chance to participate in additional classes, giving them more bang for their travel buck.
Optional Titling Classes

- **Graduate Novice Class**
  
  Class between
  Novice and Open

- **Graduate Novice Title (GN)**

This class consists of a mix of exercises between Novice and Open – and dogs earning three qualifying legs in this class can bear the GN title after their name.
This class is an excellent step between Open and Utility levels and features Utility exercises that are broken down into smaller segments with less distance.

The title for this class is the GO.
Optional Titling Classes

- Versatility Class
  Encompasses exercises from all levels – in 1 of 12 orders, random selection by judge on the day of the event.
- Versatility Title (VER)

This is a fun class that consists of two exercises from Novice, two exercises from Open and two exercises from Utility. The exercises are selected by the judge and are not announced until the day of the trial – so exhibitors do not know what they will be performing until they arrive at the event.

Exhibitors like this class because it is different and challenging – and the new title is the VER.
This exciting new class starts July 1, 2010, and offers a great opportunity for new exhibitors and new dogs.

All exercises in the Beginning Novice class are conducted on leash except for the Recall – and the handler can put the leash back on the dog as soon as that exercise is completed.

AKC feels this class is a strong transition from Rally Novice (which is all on-lead) to traditional obedience.

Doing off-lead work can be intimidating for some exhibitors, especially people who are just getting started, so this offers them a great way to enter obedience – and soon they can be rewarded with a title!
In addition to the new Optional Titling Classes, AKC added three new Non-Regular obedience classes as of January 1, 2009.

Dogs cannot earn titles in Non-Regular classes, but they are scored and win ribbons.

We have been receiving a great deal of positive feedback about these new classes – both from clubs that say the entries have been high and from exhibitors who like the less formal structure.
The new classes are the Wild Card Novice, Wild Card Open and Wild Card Utility.

Exhibitors like these for several reasons. First, handlers are allowed to praise and encourage their dogs during exercises.

Second, the handlers may select one exercise as their Wild Card. That means they may opt to not perform that exercise and still receive the full point value - or they can perform the exercise and receive the full point value regardless of how their dog performed.

These days, there are fewer obedience matches where exhibitors can train and proof their dogs – so the Wild Card classes offer them an excellent opportunity to do this in a trial environment.
Helping Clubs Save Money

- Save on ribbons with labels for Date/Place
- Two Concurrent all-breed obedience trials allowed (as of January 2010)
- Dogs may earn titles with 3 legs under 2 judges (as of January 2011)

In addition to new ways to schedule judges and new classes to offer, AKC has taken measures to help clubs save money on obedience trials.

As of Jan. 1, 2009, the event location and dates do not have to be permanently printed on ribbons. Clubs may attach labels with that information to the back of ribbons, enabling clubs to re-use leftover ribbons for future events.

Starting Jan. 1, 2010, a club may hold two all-breed obedience events concurrently (same facility – two events at the same time).

Potential use of the same judges for both events.

Potential for double the income.

Potential for exhibitors to title a dog over the course of two days, with an insurance leg available or move-up to the next class.

Starting Jan. 1, 2011, a dog can earn an obedience title by qualifying three times under two different judges, instead of three different judges. This helps exhibitors earn titles more easily and is a benefit for clubs when contracting with judges for their trials.
All AKC Member and Licensed Clubs are being called on to assist the Obedience program.

If your club does not hold Obedience trials and would like to start offering Obedience at your events, please contact AKC Club Relations or the Companion Events Department to receive assistance in setting up a program.

The above photo, from the National Obedience Invitational in Long Beach, is a good example of what we mean by a sterile environment. The event is in a ballroom located upstairs and far away from the rest of the activities.

Compare this to the photo you saw earlier from the Tampa event. At which event did Obedience receive the most exposure?
As with any sport or activity, we need to get new people involved to keep obedience alive.

Obedience needs the assistance of the entire AKC family, those within and outside of the sport.

The AKC greatly respects those who have devoted many years to the training and exhibiting of their dogs. We need to show appreciation to our long-time exhibitors while working together to make our sport inviting to everyone.

AKC would like to hear your input about the future of obedience and how to get more people involved in this great sport.
Ideas from Staff & Delegates

- New Exhibitor and Potential Exhibitor Briefings
- Club members assigned to Obedience Trial to answer questions and greet new exhibitors
- Demonstrations at Schools & Public Events
- Special Awards for Novice Exhibitors
- Schedule Novice classes earlier in the day

To get our discussion started, first we want to share ideas that were submitted by the AKC Staff and Delegates.
Ideas from Staff & Delegates

- Send Thank You Notes to Novice A Exhibitors
- Planned Get-togethers for Obedience exhibitors after trials
- Recruit 4-H and other youth groups to help with your events
- Work with 4-H and other youth groups to run matches and let the youth keep the proceeds for their program
Ideas from Staff & Delegates

- New Conformation Exhibitor Briefings should include tours of the obedience trial
- Schedule Rally and Obedience near the same times and in the same building
- Schedule Novice B before Novice A so new exhibitors can watch the B class first
- More AKC clubs should offer training classes

Now for your homework. As a group, come up with 5 to 10 ideas on ways to:

- Bring new people into Obedience
- Keep new exhibitors in our sport
- Interest families in attending and returning to trials
- Interest people in volunteering to help at trials

Take the list and select three items and dedicate your club to try these ideas at your next event. If they work, keep them and select additional items from the list to try next time. When you have tried every idea on the list, then make a new list.

Please share your lists with AKC as AKC is interested in your ideas and would like to share them with other clubs.

A challenge has been issued by the AKC Companion Event Department. Every obedience exhibitor in our sport should bring one new exhibitor into obedience each year. Every judge should mentor someone they believe would make a good obedience judge and help them move into judging every two years.

If we all accepted this challenge, just think where we would be in five years.
The AKC welcomes any questions, ideas or concerns.

Thank you for attending our presentation and thank you for supporting the AKC Obedience program!