

## **What is Foundation Agility.**

Foundation is where you start your agility journey. People often wonder why they cannot start in Beginners, but first you need to learn the foundation skills. Then you can progress to running short courses in beginners. Even experienced agility handlers start new dogs/pups in foundation

Your dog needs to work equally well on your left and right hand sides, walking and running with you and changing sides fluently. You need to be able to position your dog (sit, drop or stand) on either side and to leave him in position while you walk away. We introduce the concept of a release word meaning your dog can break position when cued. Actually you should already be using a release word in obedience to end a behaviour such as a stay. A prompt recall is also necessary.

Your dog training skills will be tested as you learn to move away from luring a behaviour and begin learning to shape the behaviour. Understanding the use of a clicker or bridge word will be important. At this stage your dog should start to focus on the job not on the food or toy. Hopefully this will be an 'ah ha' moment for you and your dog.

You will also learn to send your dog away from you, initially around a cone, then to a jump. We introduce the tunnel which most dogs love and also some jumping exercises – believe it or not, not all dogs jump properly or know how to collect their bodies.

Finally you will learn how to teach your dog to weave thru 12 poles and to negotiate the large contact obstacles safely and correctly.

Whilst we use a lot of food rewards, we also like to use toys. Teaching a tug and retrieve to your hand is very useful.

To make any progress you need to put in time at home practicing all these exercises. Very little equipment is required – 4 garden stakes for weaving plus a short plank 30cm wide and as long as your dog. Jumps can be made with a garden stake on some bricks, height is not important at this stage. Traffic cones are useful but anything you can teach your dog to go around such as a chair will do.

Warning: Agility is addictive 😊