



Royal Kennel Club

# Heelwork to Music Regulations

2026

## **Royal Kennel Club Regulation Booklets**

This is one of a series of booklets designed to present the Regulations in a more accessible form. The complete set of Rules & Regulations is of course still available within the Royal Kennel Club Year Book.

There are booklets available for Breed Shows, Obedience Shows, Agility Shows, Working Trials and Bloodhound Trials, Heelwork to Music, Field Trials and Rally. Whilst including all the relevant regulations also included is an extract from the B Regulations on the requirements of dog registration.

# GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR HEELWORK TO MUSIC COMPETITIONS (HTM)

*As at 1st January 2026*

Heelwork to Music competitions are for the purpose of giving handlers an opportunity to demonstrate skilful movements by their dog and to perform heel work and freestyle movements in a combined manner that interprets the chosen music and reflects the dog and handler working as a team. Additionally, such competitions should have spectator appeal and allow reasonable audience response where appropriate, even when the dog is working.

## **1. Welfare of dogs.**

An exhibitor (or competitor) whose dog is entered at a Royal Kennel Club licensed event should take all reasonable steps to ensure the needs of their dog(s) are met, and should not knowingly put their dogs' health and welfare at risk by any action, default, omission or otherwise. A breach of this Regulation may be referred to the Board for disciplinary action under Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations. The use of pinch collars, electronic shock collars, or prong collars, is not permitted at any Heelwork to Music event licensed by the Royal Kennel Club. This shall apply at the venue and within the precincts of the competition.

## **2. Application.**

- a. The application for a licence to hold a HTM competition must be made to the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club, at least six months before the proposed date of the competition, together with the appropriate licence fee.
- b. The Board shall have the power to grant, withhold or cancel permission to hold any licensed HTM competition.
- c. Any cancellation or abandonment of a competition without prior permission of the Board must be reported in writing to the Royal Kennel Club without delay, and must be carried out in accordance with the relevant Royal Kennel Club published event cancellation policy.
- d. Licences issued will only be valid if on the day of the event a current public liability insurance document is held.

## **3. Code of Conduct.**

Those taking part in Royal Kennel Club licensed/approved events are expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards, in accordance with Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations and appropriate Codes of Conduct as published from time to time.

## **4. Licensed HTM competitions.**

Licensed HTM competitions held under Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations are those held under a licence granted by the Board of the Royal Kennel Club to registered societies or other organisations approved by the Board of the Royal Kennel Club and are:

- a. Premier Heelwork to Music competitions. Classes may be limited to a prescribed number of routines. Competition organisers may schedule

their choice of official categories and official classes, including qualifying heats for Royal Kennel Club competitions. Additional classes may be scheduled but only in conjunction with official classes. Only Royal Kennel Club registered societies are eligible to apply for these licences.

- b. Open Heelwork to Music competitions. Classes may be limited to a prescribed number of routines. Competition organisers may schedule their choice of official categories and official classes, except qualifying heats for Royal Kennel Club competitions. Additional classes may be scheduled but only in conjunction with official classes.

### **5. Societies are required to apply for permission to hold Special Events.**

Applications should be submitted to the Royal Kennel Club by email at least six months before the start of any qualifying heats for the event.

Special Events are designated as any activity-related event which cannot be included on the schedule of a normally licensed show/trial/competition due to being invitational and therefore not open to all competitors, or which are not being held at a licensed show. Where competitors qualify for a final via heats held at that and other shows/trials/competitions, special event permission must be sought for the final whether it is held in conjunction with a licensed show/trial/competition or as a separate standalone event. This would not apply where all of the heats are held at the same show/trial/competition at which the final is held.

The regulations relating to the disqualification and forfeit of awards will apply to these events.

### **6. Documentation.**

At every HTM competition the following documents must be available:

- a. The licence for the competition.
- b. A current public liability insurance document, which must be clearly displayed.
- c. A copy of the Royal Kennel Club Regulations relevant to HTM competitions.
- d. A copy of the schedule and programme for the competition.
- e. The completed entry forms for the competition.
- f. A Royal Kennel Club incident book, containing details of all incidents occurring at the competition, a copy of which must be submitted to the Royal Kennel Club within 14 days.

### **7. Jurisdiction and responsibilities.**

The officers and committee members of the society / or the licensee holding the licence are deemed responsible for organising and conducting the competition safely and in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Kennel Club and agree to abide by and adopt any decision of the Board or any authority to whom the Board may delegate its powers subject to the conditions of Regulation L33. In so doing those appointed as officers and committee members, or the licensee, accept that they are jointly and severally responsible for the organisation of the competition and that this is a binding undertaking.

Any decision given against the society under Rule A11 of the Royal Kennel Club Rules may be communicated by the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club to the Secretaries of registered or affiliated societies holding licensed events, and may also be published in the Royal Kennel Club Journal, together with a report of the proceedings in the matter.

Any notice sent to the Secretary of the Society at the contact address duly lodged at the Royal Kennel Club shall be deemed full and sufficient notice on the part of the Royal Kennel Club of (a) any proceedings, matters or decision of the Board, or of any Authority to whom the Board may have delegated its powers or (b) of anything arising out of the competition licence or to the conduct of the Competition, or (c) of any other matter whatsoever arising out of or in connection with the same. Any change in officers or committee members must be notified to the Royal Kennel Club.

### **8. Competition Manager/Organiser criteria.**

The Competition Manager and/or Competition Organiser and/or appointed persons must fulfil the following criteria, prior to undertaking the role:

- a. To have attended a Royal Kennel Club Heelwork to Music Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar, and have passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination within the previous five years
- b. To have attended a Heelwork to Music Competition Management Seminar within the previous five years.

### **9. Entry forms.**

- a. A separate application for entry must be made by each exhibitor and acceptance of the entry declaration must be given in accordance with the provisions specified thereon - whether in writing or via the internet. Entries cannot be accepted without the appropriate fees or acceptance of the entry declaration. An entry form must include a box for the Royal Kennel Club registration number or Authority to Compete (ATC) number of the dog and the standard declaration as included in the specimen entry form issued by the Royal Kennel Club.
- b. All entry forms must be preserved by the competition organisers for at least twelve months from the closing date of entries and must be forwarded to the Royal Kennel Club if requested, together with any other documents.

### **10. Eligibility.**

- a. Only dogs of twelve calendar months of age and over on the day of the competition are eligible for entry in Heelwork to Music classes. Only dogs of eighteen calendar months of age and over on the day of the competition are eligible for entry in Freestyle. However, competition organisers may accept Not for Competition entries at their discretion. Dogs 12 weeks and over are eligible to enter Not for Competition.
- b. If, in the opinion of the Board, a dog is of a savage disposition it shall be ineligible for entry at any HTM competition held under Royal Kennel Club Regulations.
- c. Persons disqualified or suspended under Royal Kennel Club Rules are not eligible to take part in any Royal Kennel Club licensed event.
- d. No activity shall be conducted which permits, encourages or develops aggression in a dog.
- e. Dogs entered in HTM competitions must be registered at the Royal Kennel Club in accordance with Royal Kennel Club Regulations for Classification and Registration [B].

### **11. Control of dogs.**

The owner, exhibitor, handler or other person in charge of a dog at Royal Kennel Club licensed events must at all times ensure that the dog is kept under proper

control whilst at the licensed venue including its environs, car and caravan parks and approaches. This Regulation applies before the event (at any time during the set up period at the venue), during the event and afterwards (at any time during the breakdown of the event). The mating of bitches within the precincts of the competition, as stipulated above, is forbidden. An exhibitor or competitor should ensure that contact details for any handler are available and must be provided upon request in any investigation of a breach of this regulation by such handler.

## 12. Competing.

- a. No person shall carry out punitive correction or harsh handling of any dog at any time whilst at the licensed venue, including its environs, car and caravan parks and approaches.
- b. No competitor shall impugn the decisions of the judge or judges.
- c. For the duration of the competition and including those in the exercise area, all dogs must be on a lead except when competing, undertaking a practice round, when a lead may be used or practising prior to competition.
- d. Food or toys shall not be carried in the ring or given to a dog whilst in the ring.
- e. Dogs may only wear a half-check collar or a smooth collar which may be decorated.
- f. No costume or routine should bring discredit to heelwork to music.
- g. Props appropriate to the routine may be used and must remain in the ring and may not be intentionally removed until completion of the routine. No real or realistic imitation firearms may be used as props. Simulated gunshot may not be used.
- h. The duration of the routine should be a maximum length as detailed below. An over-run of 5% is permitted, but 2 marks will be deducted from the final score for any time taken in excess of this.  
 Starters maximum time limit - up to 2½ minutes  
 Novice maximum time limit - up to 3 minutes  
 Intermediate maximum time limit - up to 3½ minutes  
 Advanced maximum time limit - up to 4 minutes
- i. No activity shall be conducted which may be injurious to the dog. Extreme or unnatural moves which are not beneficial to the dog's structure and conformation and which may be degrading, harmful or injurious to the dog must be avoided and if used will result in the dog's elimination from the ring.
- j. The music and routine must be suitable for a family audience and the spectator appeal of the programme should be apparent.
- k. The bearing and deportment should be appropriate to the routine.
- l. The decision to withdraw from competition is entirely at the discretion of the competitor, however, a competitor may not withdraw once a routine has been completed and scored.
- m. A dog can not be entered in the same class more than once.
- n. Once a dog has entered the ring to compete, no further practice may be carried out.
- o. If the music stops during a routine the competitor must be given an opportunity to complete the routine. The handler's back-up music, which must be supplied prior to competing may be used and/or alternative equipment, if this was the reason for failure. The judges should continue marking from the point at which the music stopped. If the competitor chooses to withdraw from the class, no marks will be awarded.

### 13. Practice Rounds.

Practice rounds are permitted at the judges' discretion and the judges' decision is final, provided their main purpose is to aid the dog's or handler's confidence and their experience of the working ring, and subject to the following:

- a. Where practice rounds are allowed, they must be available for all competitors in that class and must comply with the division entered.
- b. The time taken must not exceed the duration for routines at the relevant level.
- c. The use of toys which emit any noise, and the use of food are not permitted.
- d. The usual rules and etiquette for those who compete must be followed except that the handler may use as many cues as necessary to aid the dog, the handler may attach a lead to the dog and may touch the dog in a non-harmful and non-intimidating manner.
- e. Excessive exuberance from the handler or dog will not be permitted if the judge considers that it could interfere with the chances of winning of other dogs and handlers.

### 14. Entry for competition.

- a. Societies have discretion to accept online entries only, postal entries only, or both online and postal entries. Schedules must clearly state the way in which entries may be made.
- b. Entries for the event must close at the time indicated on the schedule, which must be no later than 14 days before the competition starts.
- c. Entries received bearing the postmark of the date for closing of entries or before must be accepted subject to the conditions of Regulation L16.i.
- d. Entries from competitors claiming that undelivered entries have been correctly posted must be accepted on the day of the competition, subject to the conditions of Regulation L16.i. Such claims will have to be substantiated to the Royal Kennel Club which will request documentary evidence, subsequent to the competition.
- e. A dog must, at the time of entry for a competition, be registered as required by Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations in the owner's name (or registration or transfer applied for). In the case of joint registered owners the full name of every registered owner must be given.  
Where an owner makes an entry on behalf of another joint registered owner(s) or where an agent enters on behalf of a single or joint registered owner(s) such person must have the authority and consent from the single or joint registered owner(s) to sign the entry form on their behalf thereby binding them all to Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations. In the event of any dispute, evidence of such authority and consent will be required.  
A dog acquired subsequent to entry having been made at a competition may compete as the new owner's property provided that an application for the transfer has been forwarded to the Royal Kennel Club before the competition, and the new owner has undertaken to abide by the Regulations and conditions of the original entry form (and in accordance with the conditions set out above).
- f. Separate entry forms must be completed by each competitor and must be signed by the competitor or his authorised agent. Entry forms must be accompanied by the appropriate fees and a stamped addressed envelope, with the exception of internet entries.

- g. In estimating the number of awards won, all wins up to and including the seventh day before the closing date of entries shall be counted when entering for any class.
- h. No amendment may be made to an entry after the closing date of entries except for music where detailed on an entry form, as requested by a competition organiser, which may be changed on the day and which must be reported to the competition manager on arrival.
- i. The entries for competition must be published in the programme.
- j. A dog must not compete in the same class more than once, including special classes.

### **15. Schedule.**

- a. The competition organisers must issue a schedule for the competition, such schedule to follow the layout of the specimen schedule provided by the Royal Kennel Club and conform with Royal Kennel Club Regulations. No modifications may be made to the schedule once published, except by permission of the Royal Kennel Club, and such modifications must be advertised.
- b. A copy of the schedule issued for each competition must be retained by the organisations for at least one year from the date of the competition and must be forwarded to the Royal Kennel Club if requested, together with any other documents.

### **16. Management**

- a. Catalogues – The competition organisers must publish a catalogue for the competition containing names and addresses of all competitors (unless requested by the competitors to be withheld from publication), and full particulars of each dog as given on the entry form by the competitor, except dogs entered Not for Competition.
- b. Submission of catalogues  
A copy of the official catalogue for each competition, containing a full and correct list of all entries, with all the awards correctly marked, must be retained by the organisations for at least one year from the date of the competition and must be forwarded to the Royal Kennel Club if requested, together with any other documents.
- c. Competitors shall be notified of the judges for each class, the running order of classes and the number of entries in each class, along with their individual running orders.
- d. All classes must run consecutively; interleaving of classes is not permitted.
- e. If a class entry received exceeds 25, the class shall be equally divided (to within one dog) by a draw. If the resulting individual class entry, after division, exceeds 25, a further division of the total class entry shall take place so that each equal division of the class is 25 or less. Classes with an entry of 25 or less must not be split.
- f. If after the closing date of entries, the number of entries exceeds the maximum number stated in the schedule, a ballot may take place for any class except Advanced, at the competition organisers' discretion.
- g. All routines must be timed by an official timekeeper appointed by the competition organisers, who will record the duration of each routine and advise judges of any over-run. The routine starts when the music begins and ends when the music finishes.

- h. The results and individual judges' scores for all routines must be displayed on the day and accessible to all competitors.
- i. The competition organisers may reserve the right to refuse entries.
- j. Premier competition rings shall not be less than 15m x 16m.

### 17. Judges approval

- a. Wherever possible as many of the judges on the panel should have competed at and thus have practical experience of the level they are judging. (With the exception of advanced classes where the judges should fulfil the criteria detailed below). An experienced lead (head) judge should be appointed for each class.
- b. Competition organisers must be satisfied that the following minimum conditions have been met for all judges for any Heelwork to Music/Freestyle class:
  - (i) All judges must have qualified a dog out of Starters' class in either Heelwork to Music or Freestyle classes and have a minimum of two years experience competing in standard classes at a minimum of six Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions.
  - (ii) Judges must demonstrate a good knowledge of heelwork to music and a thorough understanding of the rules of heelwork to music.
  - (iii) Additionally judges must have attended a Royal Kennel Club Heelwork to Music Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination. From 1 January 2016 this will apply to new and existing judges. The initial Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and examination must be classroom based.
  - (iv) All Judges must have attended a Regulations and Judging Procedure seminar every five years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure exam. From 1 January 2023 all judges must have attended a Regulations and Judging Procedure seminar, either classroom based or online, and must have passed the examination, every five years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination.
  - (v) A judges first three appointments for competitions must be restricted to Starters and Novice.
  - (vi) From 1 January 2023, prior to being fully qualified, a judge must undertake mentoring by an approved Heelwork to Music mentor on three separate occasions:
    - (1) observing the whole class from the ringside and discussing it with the mentor
    - (2) carrying out two judging appointments, at starters or novice, and discussing the marking and results with the mentor.
  - (viii) The third judging appointment must be restricted to starters or novice. After the third appointment the judge may undertake any further appointments.
  - (ix) Or judges have otherwise been approved by the Board.
- c. Qualification for judges for Advanced Heelwork to Music and Freestyle classes
  - (i) Judges must demonstrate a good knowledge of heelwork to music and a thorough understanding of Royal Kennel Club Heelwork to Music Regulations L.

- (ii) A minimum of two years experience competing at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions.
- (iii) A minimum of one years experience of judging at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions and
- (iv) To have judged a minimum of 15 licensed Heelwork to Music/Freestyle classes and
- (v) To have judged a minimum of five classes at intermediate level in either discipline.

Note: Heelwork to Music handlers may judge Freestyle classes at the level they are approved to judge and vice versa.

### **18. Judges and judging.**

- a. Judges at Royal Kennel Club licensed HTM Competitions are expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards in accordance with Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations and appropriate Codes of Best Practice as published from time to time.
- b. Judges at the competition may enter/handle a dog at the competition they are judging but not in the class they are judging.
- c. Judges' discretion prevails and judges' decisions are final.
- d. Judges must eliminate a dog from the ring if it fouls in the ring.
- e. Organisers of HTM Competitions must ensure that those invited to judge are competent to fulfil their engagement taking into account the nature of the competition.
- f. In the event of the handler physically disciplining the dog in the ring, the lead judge must eliminate the dog from further competition in the class.
- g. The judge(s) must observe the dog at all times whilst it is in the ring, even after elimination from competition.
- h. In the event of dogs obtaining equality of marks in Heelwork to Music competitions, the accuracy and team performance mark will decide the result. In a Freestyle competition, the musical interpretation mark will decide the result. Where there is still equality of marks the order shall be decided at the discretion of the lead (head) judge.
- i. If the overall score is below 60% (18 marks), the class points will be withheld for that routine. There shall be at least four awards on offer in every class and printed award cards and rosettes may be given but the associated points would be withheld.
- j. If a dog leaves the ring and ceases working it should be eliminated from the competition but allowed to continue and complete its routine, as long as the music is still playing. If a dog accidentally steps outside the ring during a routine it will not be penalised.

### **19. Judging contracts.**

- a. Invitations to judge must be made by competition organisers in writing and they must ensure that written acceptances are received. Written acceptances must be followed by written confirmation of the appointment by the competition organisers upon which a judging contract will be deemed to have been formed. Judging contracts must be in place for Premier Heelwork to Music Competitions, and details of the appointment published before the date of the competition.

- b. Competition organisers are required to include the following wording in judges' invitation letters:  
 'In accepting this invitation you agree to be bound by Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations and the Royal Kennel Club Code of Best Practice for Judges, and confirm that you are qualified to judge in accordance with Heelwork to Music Regulation L17. In addition, you will familiarise yourself with the Royal Kennel Club L Regulations which are current at the date of the judging appointment. In doing so you also recognise that you are obliged to notify us in writing of any change in personal circumstances which may affect your ability to fulfil this judging appointment. You should note that we reserve the right to cancel the contract before the date of the appointment if there is such a change in your circumstances, which in our reasonable opinion would adversely affect your ability to fulfil the appointment'. Clubs may cancel a judging appointment where there is clear evidence that the judge's ability to fulfil the appointment has been adversely affected, or in consultation with the judge.
- c. In the event of a judge or competition organiser being in breach of any of the terms of a judging contract, the Board may impose a fine. The judge or competition organiser may be required by the Board to give reasons for such a breach, and in the event of the explanation not being considered satisfactory, the Board may impose a fine.
- d. In the event of such fines not being paid within the time stipulated by the Board, the judge or officers and committee members of the society / or the licensee, as applicable, may at the discretion of the Board be dealt with as if a complaint under Royal Kennel Club Rule A11 had been lodged and proved to the satisfaction of the Board.

## **20. Judges marking criteria.**

There must be a minimum of two and a maximum of three judges for each class, and judges should be seated a minimum of 2 metres apart, except in exceptional circumstances, of which the Society should notify the Royal Kennel Club as soon as possible. Each judge will mark all three sections of the judging criteria as follows:

- a. Content and Flow - 10 marks
- (1) The programme content conforms to the definitions for Heelwork to Music or Freestyle and should be varied, with no excessive repetition of movement, and the content being appropriate to the routine.
  - (2) All movements should be appropriate to the structure and conformation of the dog.
  - (3) The content should flow naturally and be formulated in order to create an interesting routine that makes good use of the ring.
  - (4) Degree of difficulty of movements should be taken into account.
- b. Accuracy and team performance - 10 marks
- (1) Movements from the team including heelwork should be accurately and smoothly executed.
  - (2) The dog should work in a natural, willing and committed manner.

- (3) The dog should respond promptly and appropriately to the cues given. Signals from the handler should be subtle and form part of the handler's movement.
- (4) The dog and handler should work as a team, presenting a captivating performance for the audience and judges, giving an overall appearance of harmony between dog and handler.
- c. Musical interpretation - 10 marks
  - (1) Interpretation of the rhythm, phrasing and timing of the music should be apparent; the choice of music should suit the team.
  - (2) Choreography should be apparent with the story or theme being inspired from the music. The chosen music should be well represented by the choice of moves by both handler and dog.
  - (3) Primary emphasis of musical interpretation should be on the dog's movements although the handler may be expressive.
  - (4) Handlers' dress and any props used should be suitable and applicable to the interpretation of the routine with all the props integrated into the performance.
- d. In the event of dogs obtaining equal marks in Heelwork to Music competitions, the accuracy and team performance mark will decide the result. In a Freestyle competition, the Musical interpretation mark will decide the result. Where there is still equality of marks the order shall be decided at the discretion of the lead (head) judge.
- e. Where applicable judges should mark to one decimal place.
- f. Excessive noise or barking must be penalised and a maximum of 4 marks can be deducted from the overall score at the judge's discretion.
- g. Any unnecessary physical assistance must be penalised with points being deducted from the accuracy and team performance section.
- h. Any moves not permitted by virtue of Regulation L12.i. or any activity that may be injurious to the dog must be penalised by immediate elimination from the ring.

### **21. Music.**

The organiser(s) of HTM competitions must ensure that the venue for the competition has the appropriate licence for playing music. The organiser must also supply suitable equipment for the playing of such music.

### **22. Veterinary support.**

The organiser(s) of a licensed HTM competition is required to arrange veterinary support compatible with the competition.

### **23. Dog fouling.**

- a. Any owner, competitor, handler or other person in charge of a dog is required to remove, as soon as possible any fouling caused by their dog(s) at any Royal Kennel Club licensed event within the licensed venue and within the environs of that event including car and caravan parks and approaches.
- b. Any organisation holding a Royal Kennel Club licensed event is required to provide an adequate number of receptacles for the disposal of such fouling.

## 24. Removal of dogs.

Following discussion between the competition management and/or a veterinary surgeon a dog shall be prevented from competing and/or removed from the competition if it is:-

- a. A bitch which is in season.
- b. Suffering from any infectious or contagious disease.
- c. Interfering with the safety or chance of winning of another competitor.
- d. Of such temperament or is so much out of control as to be a danger to the safety of any person or other animal.
- e. Likely to cause suffering to the dog if it continues competing.

The circumstances of such a removal shall be recorded in the competition incident book and submitted to the Royal Kennel Club.

## 25. Objections.

- a. An objection must be lodged directly with the Royal Kennel Club within seven days after the last day of the competition and under these circumstances a copy of the objection must be sent to the competition secretary.

When an objection is lodged the following information must be given;

A statement detailing the objection, quoting the relevant regulation(s).

The objection fee of £35, or such amount as may from time to time be decided by the Board.

The name and address of the objector.

The name and address of the owner of the dog (if relevant).

All relevant evidence.

The objection fee may be returned after consideration of the objection.

- b. With the exception of objections made under Regulation L.24 (Removal of Dogs) the dog should be allowed to compete and a full report made to the Royal Kennel Club.
- c. The right to lodge an objection to a dog or any action taken at a competition is limited to anyone in attendance at the competition not under a term of suspension imposed by the Royal Kennel Club, or the owner of a dog competing or his accredited representative.
- d. No objection shall be invalidated solely on the grounds that it was incorrectly lodged.
- e. Objections or alleged breaches of Royal Kennel Club Regulations shall be referred to the Board who shall have the power to delegate the hearing of the objection or breach of regulation to the relevant Committee or may decide to refer the matter for disciplinary action under Royal Kennel Club Rule A11.
- f. Any appeal against the relevant Committee decision must be lodged within fourteen days of the decision being given and will be subject to the prescribed appeals procedure as shall be determined by the Board from time to time.

## **26. Disqualification and forfeit of awards.**

- a. A dog may be disqualified by the Board from any award whether an objection has been lodged or not, if proved amongst other things to have been:-
  - (1) Competing at an unrecognised competition.
  - (2) Entered for competition or handled by a person disqualified or suspended under Rule A11, as from the date of the complaint having been lodged at the Royal Kennel Club and for the period of disqualification or suspension.
  - (3) Not entered on a Royal Kennel Club approved entry form in the name and with the details which are recorded with the Royal Kennel Club.
  - (4) Entered after the date announced for closing of entries, subject to the conditions of Regulation L14.e. or contrary to Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations.
  - (5) Suffering from an infectious or contagious disease.
  - (6) Competing in a class for which it was not entered.
  - (7) Not correctly registered and recorded in the name of the competitor at the Royal Kennel Club or as provided in Regulation L14.e.
  - (8) Handled in the class by the scheduled judge's spouse, immediate family or is resident at the same address as the scheduled judge. This shall not apply to a judge appointed in an emergency.
  - (9) To have been the subject of any other default, omission, action or incident occurring at or in connection with the competition rendering it unfair that the award should be allowed to stand.
- b. A dog shall be disqualified by the Board from any awards gained whether an objection has been lodged or not, if entered in a class for which it is ineligible and not withdrawn from competition and the competitor may be fined at the discretion of the Board.
- c. The owner of the dog disqualified for any of the above reasons is liable to forfeit all entry fees paid, and all prize money won by such dog.

## **27. Order of merit when a dog is disqualified.**

If a dog be disqualified, the prize to which it would otherwise have been entitled shall be forfeited. The committee may at its discretion move up the dog or dogs next in order of merit (up to and including reserve or fourth place) to take the prize or prize(s).

## **28. Fraudulent or discreditable conduct at competitions.**

The secretary of a HTM competition must immediately report in writing to the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club any case of alleged fraudulent or discreditable conduct, or any default, omission or incident at or in connection with the competition which may come under his notice, even where parties concerned have indicated that they intend taking no action and at the same time forward to the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club all documents and information in connection therewith which maybe in his possession or power. If evidence is placed before the Board to its satisfaction that undue influence has been exercised by a person(s), or that any improper means have been used to influence the appointment of a judge or to interfere with the exhibition of a dog at any competition held under Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations, the Board may require all correspondence and evidence in connection with the case to be produced in order that it may deal with the offender(s) under Royal Kennel Club Rule A11.

### **29. Penalty for infringement of Royal Kennel Club Rules by HTM competition organisers.**

The Board shall have power to fine the competition society which has breached Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations in the conduct of the competition.

### **30. Payment of sponsorship.**

In the absence of any agreement to the contrary, the liability of the sponsor(s) of any class or classes at a competition shall be limited to making good any deficiency between the entry fees received and any prize money paid out. The competition secretary must intimate the amount of sponsorship due within one calendar month of the close of the competition and the sponsor(s) must pay this amount within fourteen days of receipt of such a notice. If the sponsorship is not paid within the specified time the competition secretary must report the matter to the Royal Kennel Club.

### **31. Penalties.**

The Board shall have power to impose any of the following penalties upon any person for any breach of Royal Kennel Club Regulations subject to a right of appeal, notice of intention of which must be lodged within 14 days from the date on which the decision is given and subject to the prescribed appeals process as shall be determined by the Board from time to time;

- a. Warn
- b. Censure/reprimand
- c. Apology directive (Conduct Regulation or the Control of Dogs Regulation)
- d. Fine
- e. Award disqualified

In addition, the Board may make the following directives;

- f. A dog's registration record may be marked 'incident recorded'
- g. A dog's registration record may be endorsed 'not eligible for entry in any event held under Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations, nor any unlicensed event recognised by the Royal Kennel Club.'

The right of appeal against directives f) and g) listed above extends to an appeal on the finding of fact of a deliberate dog bite only, but does not extend to an appeal against those directives f) and g) in terms of cancellation or modification of such directives if there is a finding of fact of an intentional dog bite.

In the event of any fine not being paid, or non compliance with any apology directive issued within the time stipulated by the Board, then that person may, at the discretion of the Board, be dealt with as if a complaint under Royal Kennel Club Rule A11 had been lodged and proved to the satisfaction of the Board.

For complaints of conduct whether at a licensed event or on social media, in addition to a warning issued - a short term fixed period of refusal of entry/attendance at Royal Kennel Club licensed events may also be imposed in accordance with procedures to be published from time to time to implement this regulation.

**32. Special competitions.**

Special competitions with restricted entry or other conditions not conforming with these Regulations may be scheduled on application to the Royal Kennel Club. Application must be made at least 6 months prior to the competition, in writing, including full details of the proposed competition.

**33. Delegated powers of the Scottish Kennel Club.**

- a. For the purpose of paragraphs 2, 4 and 10 of these Regulations the power to grant, withhold or cancel permission to hold any licensed HTM competition in Scotland shall be delegated to the Scottish Kennel Club.
- b. For the purposes of these Regulations, all powers of the Board relative to competitions held in Scotland and licensed by the Scottish Kennel Club are delegated to the Executive Council of the Scottish Kennel Club. Applications for licences, objections and allegations of fraudulent or discreditable conduct relative to HTM competitions licensed by the Scottish Kennel Club must be made to the Secretary General of the Scottish Kennel Club, Unit 2 - Ground Floor, Satellite Business Park, Macmerry, Tranent, East Lothian. EH33 1RY.

**34. Eligibility and schedule of classes.**

The detailed Regulations for Eligibility and Schedule of Classes are given at Annex A.

## ELIGIBILITY AND SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

These Regulations must be read in conjunction with Royal Kennel Club General Heelwork to Music Regulations (HTM) [L].

**1. Official categories.** There are two official categories, Heelwork to Music and Freestyle. Each category has equal status, and the following class structure applies to both categories:-

- a. Heelwork to Music. The principal element of the Heelwork to Music category will be the dog working off lead in the heel work position, on the left or right hand side of the handler, facing forward or backward, across the front or back of the handler, moving in any direction, at any pace. The dog's shoulder should be approximately level with, and reasonably close to, the handler's leg. All other positions are defined as Freestyle. A minimum of two thirds of the routine should consist of heel work.
- b. Freestyle. A Freestyle routine will be the dog working off lead and contain movements in any position. Heelwork as described above is acceptable although such movements must not exceed one third of the routine.

**2.** In the following definitions of classes all points must be gained in official classes only. A class will be won by the dog and handler partnership that has gained the most points. To count towards class progression, a first place in starters or novice, or two first places in intermediate must have been won with an overall score of at least 60% (18 marks).

**3.** The following points will be awarded in all Royal Kennel Club standard classes:

First place -	10 points
Second place -	6 points
Third place -	4 points
Fourth place -	2 points

On entrance to the next level of classes, the points will return to zero.

**4. Official classes.** For one dog and one handler only. When assessing eligibility to enter a competition, points gained in one official category will not count for the other official category, and when assessing eligibility of a handler for starters and novice classes, the points referred to must have been points gained by the handler with one dog and not an accumulation of points gained with two or more dogs. At the discretion of the competition organisers dogs may be entered in eligible classes in both categories, however a different routine must be worked.

- a. *Starters.* Neither the dog nor the handler must have gained 14 points or more including a win, nor have elected to progress on points (20 points or more) in official starters classes at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions. Dogs or handlers must progress to novice once 14 points or more including a win have been gained in starters classes but may, at the handler's discretion, elect to progress on 20 points without a win. *NB Handlers and dogs previously qualified out of starters are not eligible for this class*

- b. *Novice*. The dog or the handler must have gained 14 points or more including a win, or have elected to progress on 20 points or more in official starters classes at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions. The dog must progress to intermediate once 16 points or more including a win, or a total of 28 points or more have been gained in novice classes.
- c. *Intermediate*. The dog must have gained 16 points or more including a win, or a total of 28 points or more in official novice classes at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions. The dog must progress to advanced once at least two first places have been gained in intermediate classes.
- d. *Advanced*. The dog must have gained at least two first places in official intermediate classes at Royal Kennel Club licensed Heelwork to Music competitions.

### **5. Special classes.**

- a. At all types of Heelwork to Music competitions societies may schedule classes, other than those defined above, as 'special' classes. The eligibility for special classes must be defined by the society and included in the schedule. The word 'special' must be included in the title of the class.
- b. Wins, places and points gained in special classes will not count towards class progression or Excellent qualifications.

**6.** A dog must only be entered in a class per day for which it is eligible in each category. A dog is only eligible for one level.

**7.** Once a dog has progressed to the next class it is entitled to use the previous class award after its name on entry forms and printed in catalogues; only the highest award may be used. Separate awards should be indicated for Heelwork to Music and Freestyle as follows: HTM St., HTM N., HTM I. for the different classes of Heelwork to Music. FS St., FS N., FS I. for the different classes in Freestyle. Once a dog has gained 24 points in Advanced classes it will be entitled to have HTM A. or FS A. after its name as appropriate.

**8. Excellent qualifications.** If a first place has been won in starters or novice, or two first places at intermediate or advanced, when the required level of points have been gained, the dog will also be awarded an excellent qualification and can use the title "Ex" after its class title, such as: HTM St Ex

**9.** All dogs must be in possession of a Royal Kennel Club Heelwork to Music record book detailing the points gained and where each award was gained.

## REGULATIONS FOR ENTRIES IN THE STUD BOOK, CHAMPIONS AND WARRANTS

As at 1st January 2026

### 3. Warrants.

e. *Heelwork to Music or Freestyle Warrant*

A Heelwork to Music or Freestyle Warrant will be issued on application by the registered owner at the time of qualification in respect of a dog that has obtained points in standard classes at Premier and Open Competitions. The requirements for the three levels of warrant, Bronze, Silver, and Gold are:

Bronze 100 points

Silver 200 points

Gold 400 points

The following titles may be used after the name of the dog on competition entries and in catalogues:

Heelwork to Music

Bronze HTMW(B)

Silver HTMW(S)

Gold HTMW(G)

Freestyle

Bronze FSW(B)

Silver FSW(S)

Gold FSW(G)

Points awarded will be as follows:

Standard heelwork to music OR freestyle classes.

Points will be awarded at any level as long as a minimum score of 18 is achieved. Places must have been awarded by the competition organiser.

1st place 20 points

2nd place 19 points

3rd place 18 points

4th place 17 points

5th place 16 points

6th place 15 points

7th place 14 points

8th place 13 points

9th place 12 points

10th place 11 points

5 points will also be awarded to any unplaced routines that have achieved a qualifying score or above.

## ROYAL KENNEL CLUB REGULATIONS FOR CLASSIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

*As at 1st January 2026*

### **20. Dogs for competitions.**

Dogs entered for any form of Royal Kennel Club competition i.e. show classes, field trials, gundog working tests, obedience, working trials, agility, heelwork to music, and rally must be registered in the name of the person(s) making the entry. If, at the closing date for entries, the owner(s) have applied for but have not received the Royal Kennel Club registration certificate, the dog shall be entered in the name shown as the first choice on the application form for registration and the name should be followed by the letters 'N.A.F' (name applied for). In the case of applications for transfer of ownership and change of name, the dog should be entered 'T.A.F.' (transfer applied for) 'C.N.A.F.' (change of name applied for) where application has been made but not received. Dogs are exempt from registration in the following cases:-

- a. Dogs either exhibited exclusively in classes specially exempted by the Royal Kennel Club Board or in special classes sanctioned by the Board.
- b. Hounds belonging to recognised packs.

**ROYAL KENNEL CLUB REGULATIONS FOR THE  
REGISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE OF TITLE  
OF SOCIETIES, BRANCHES AND BREED COUNCILS  
AND THE AFFILIATION OF AGRICULTURAL  
SOCIETIES AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES**

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*As at 1st January 2026*

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**5. General**

- c. A Royal Kennel Club licence is issued to the designated society only and it is non transferable under any circumstances.

**Contact Details for Liaison Council Representatives – Heelwork to Music****Mrs Caroline Knight**

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## HEELWORK TO MUSIC REGULATION AMENDMENTS

### Amendment to regulation L2.a.

Regulation L2.a Application.

**TO:**

The application for a licence to hold a HTM competition must be made to the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club, at least six ~~weeks~~ **months** before the proposed date of the competition, together with the appropriate licence fee.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

### Amendment to regulation L5

Regulation L5. Societies are required to apply for permission to hold Special Events.

**TO:**

Applications should be submitted to the Royal Kennel Club by email at least six ~~weeks~~ **months** before the start of any qualifying heats for the event.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

### Amendment to regulation L12.c

Regulation L12.c

**TO:**

c. For the duration of the competition and including those in the exercise area, all dogs must be on a lead except when competing, **undertaking a practice round, when a lead may be used** or practising prior to competition.

(insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

### Amendment to regulation L13.d Practice Rounds

Regulation L13

**TO:**

d. The usual rules and etiquette for those who compete must be followed except that the handler may use as many cues as necessary to aid the dog, **the handler may attach a lead to the dog** and may touch the dog in a non-harmful and non-intimidating manner.

(insertion in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

**Activities Liaison Team  
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htm@royalkennelclub.com  
royalkennelclub.com**



**Royal Kennel Club**

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