

RLC Proposal¹ to enable judges to compete in Rally shows where they are officiating for a trial period

Aim

Alongside the other activities, the RLC has been asked to investigate whether there is support within the community for judges to be able to compete on the same day they are officiating, and to put guidance forward to The Activities Committee as to how this could work.

Community feedback (via poll) has established that there is significant majority support for this both from judges and from show organisers. It has the dual benefit of judges not having to forego competing their own dogs and will, therefore, assist show organisers to secure sufficient judges for their events. This framework for a trial period takes into account the previous problems experienced in the early years of RKC Rally and current concerns regarding smooth running of events.

Background

Previously Rally judges were allowed to compete and judge on the same day, this regulation was in place from when the Kennel Club adopted Rally in 2013 through to its removal in 2017 as it was causing issues at the time.

Guidance and clarification removed early bad practices such as using a stand-in judge to enable someone to compete in the class they were judging and splitting classes so that the judge was in a class of their own, however there remained issues with the smooth running of shows caused by some individuals. Judges were leaving the ring mid-class to attend walk throughs/run offs, refusing to judge until they had worked their own dogs, entering large numbers of dogs and expecting other judges to accommodate them at the end of the day - amongst other problems.

Trialling the concept

The trial will enable guidance and criteria to be developed to best serve the interests of all affected parties – competitors, judges and show management. Further community feedback can also be sought at key points during the trial period.

Trial Period

The trial should be for a period of 18-24 months to ensure robustness and that all regular annual show organisers have had opportunity to engage both before and after their events. The RLC would like this trial period to start as soon as possible.

How would a Trial work?

Relaxation of rule S20l for the period of the trial.

¹ Please note that some of the decisions and guidelines contained within this proposal can only be finalised after the July 2026 Activities Committee meeting, which will be held before the RLC meeting but after the RLC Agenda is published. Depending on the outcome of that meeting this may have to be reviewed as a Discussion Item instead.

S20I–Judges at a Rally competition must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their sole ownership, or handle a dog, at the competition at which they are judging. A dog recorded in part ownership with the judge may be entered for competition in any part of a class other than the part which the judge is judging.

Combined with detailed guidelines for the Rally Community.

Guidelines

- Show organisers may accept entries from judges to compete with their own dogs on the same day they are judging, noting that the judge's official role always takes precedence over working their own dogs.
- Show organisers retain the right to refuse entries from judges at their shows if they believe it will be disruptive for their given venue. This must be stated on the judge's invitations for that competition and referenced in the post show report to the RKC.
- If agreed by the show organisers judges may enter their normal standard and/or special classes – noting that they must withdraw from any class on the day which clashes or conflicts in any way with their judging appointment.
- Judges whose classes are scheduled to start at the beginning of the show must complete all of their judging obligations before engaging in any activity related to competing with their own dog (e.g. course walking). Judging obligations include signing certificates and awards being made to other competitors.
- Judges whose classes are scheduled to start later in the day, must be ready to withdraw as a competitor from any classes entered, but not yet worked, as soon as their ring space becomes available. As soon as their ring space becomes available they must prioritise their official role as judge. This includes abandoning any run offs, withdrawing from any classes not worked – including walk throughs. Any certificates/awards earned should be collected after their own judging is completed.
- In all cases judges must complete their judging obligations in full for their scheduled class(es) without interruptions relating to the possibility of working their own dogs.
- Judges should not expect that they will automatically be able to work all rounds entered. Show management may mean that arrangements have to be altered and smooth running of the show must always be prioritised.
- To reduce the likelihood of timing conflicts judges are respectfully advised to consider the number of dogs/classes that they enter. Noting that this is a trial period, which needs to function well to have any likelihood of being continued.
- Show organisers should try to adopt a consistent approach across their show regarding whether judges' entries will be accepted. Each entry received from a judge should be reviewed on an individual basis before acceptance.
- Judges on their first appointment should consider whether they will be able to give sufficient attention to their judging obligations.

Eligible classes

Competitors entering standard Level classes must enter their lowest eligible class and may also enter the subsequent class. As the regulations stand at the moment a judge would not be able to enter their lowest eligible class if they were also judging that level. This could impact on judges' willingness to accept judging appointments if they were then unable to enter the show. They may also not know what their dog's eligible level will be when accepting the appointment.

Where a judge is judging their lowest eligible class we have identified three options to consider:

1. they cannot enter Level classes at that show as they cannot enter their lowest eligible class so cannot enter their subsequent class
2. they enter "in good faith" (in the same way as with judge's dogs in joint ownership) and if the class splits they can work the other part, but they can still enter and work their subsequent class
3. judges judging their lowest eligible class have an exemption to enter their subsequent class but no further standard level classes with that dog

When finalising the approach for Rally the guidelines for the other activities should also be considered to see if a consistent approach across the activities is possible

**** Noting that this information will only be available after the July 2026 AC meeting ****

Community feedback so far indicates that option 2 the "good faith" approach is the preferred solution. This would mean that the judge withdraws from their lowest eligible level at the earliest opportunity after entries have closed – when it becomes clear that they cannot work the class.

Should societies offer judge's free entries?

The decision remains with the organisers, but community feedback indicates this should not be the expectation. Societies should carefully consider how this would impact their budget, other management issues, and whether free entry is an acceptable alternative to a fuel contribution.

Free entries might be considered a perk, encouraging entries of multiple dogs and classes. This in turn could potentially require more classes to split leading to more judges, additional rings and expense. Show organisers may need to ask judges to withdraw their entry to avoid a split class.

Where judges have paid at the point of entry the show society should endeavour to refund fees for any reasonable entries which they cannot honour.

Capped Classes at Shows

Where classes are capped, show organisers should consider any judges entries at the close of entries where space is still available, rather than at date of receipt.

This will require the trial to also include the relaxation of S5c(5) to allow judges entries for capped classes to be considered under the 10% rule rather than allocated on the date of entry.

S5c(5) The capping level applied may be adjusted upwards by a maximum of 10% after the closing date of a competition at the discretion of the competition organisers. Capping levels may not be adjusted downwards after publication of the schedule except with the prior permission of The Royal Kennel Club Board. Where total entries received exceed a capping level, entries must be processed in the order received. Processing of entry forms, and of online entries where applicable, must be managed so that the date of receipt of each entry is recorded. (It is permissible to set different opening and closing dates for online entries from those applying to postal entries.)

Trial Monitoring & Reporting

During the trial period all judges competing must be listed in the post-show report to the RKC, stating the level judged, the classes they handled in and the RKC name of the dogs worked.

Any disruption to the smooth running of the show, however minor, relating to judges competing at a show where they are judging must be entered in the incident book – it should not require an objection fee unless being reported by a competitor rather than a show official.

This information is required to enable a comprehensive review of the trial period.

Objections and Breaches

In the unlikely event that individual Judges abuse the trial period, to the extent where they significantly disrupt the smooth running of the show, then the incident book should detail their breach of the following regulations:

S3 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.

20a. Judges 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.