



Whangarei Dog Training Association Instructors Survey 2015

Report

The WDTA Committee acknowledges the valuable contribution instructors make to the life and longevity of the club. Our thanks to those who took the time to complete the survey. It has provided us with very useful information and recommendations for ways forward for the club.

Surveys were sent to 11 people recognised as taking an instructor/leader's role in various club activities. Responses were received from 9 covering a range of classes including Pet Dog Manners (PDM), Obedience, Rally Obedience (Rally O), Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and Agility.

Current status as an instructor/leader

Seven people were recognised instructors as indicated by their \$1 annual membership fee. One person indicated their status as 'other', and another as 'casual'.

WDTA Membership

The longest standing instructor joined the club in 1991. The range of time instructors have been members of the club is from 5 to 24 years.

On average instructors began instructing 2 to 4 years after becoming members and have continued without a break. One instructor who identified status as 'other' reported instructing 'on and off' and another started instructing the same year as joining the club. Two instructors reported they would like to have a break from instructing.

Qualifications/experiences/courses useful to the role of instructor/leader

Instructors reported their own experiences and special interests, personal study, and participation in courses and seminars as useful to their role as instructors/leaders.

Experiences and special interests

- show experience - competing
- time observing others
- lessons from other people/other clubs - handling techniques
- working with and training dogs
- special interest in dogs with behaviour disorders

Seminars, courses and conferences

Instructors reported the usefulness of attending or participating in (including on-line) seminars and courses (eg ...'to better understand how dogs learn...' and undertaking personal study (eg around dogs with behaviour disorders, dogs that are traumatised and mis-trained 'bad dogs',).

Dog training experts mentioned were:

- [Kamahl](#)
- [Terry Ryan](#) NZKC CGC Committee Conference (thanks to WDTA)
- [Ian Dunbar](#)
- [Pia Silvani](#)
- [John Rogerson](#)
- [Steve White](#)
- [Greg Derrett](#)
- [Susan Garrett](#)

See Appendix 1 for links to [bios](#).

The qualities and qualifications necessary to be a good instructor/leader

Instructors considered a considerable number of qualities they felt were necessary to be a good instructor/leader. Some common themes were identified:

- commitment
- being a good communicator including being a good listener
- need to enjoy working with dogs and people – love dogs!
- training experience (people) and experience in handling and training dogs
- having an interest in teaching others
- being able to show respect for, empathise with and develop good rapport with handlers so that they are active participants in the learning for themselves and their dog
- having a good knowledge base and keeping up with latest handling techniques
- ability to be able to break down training, recognising individual dog/handler needs as well as providing structured training to a group
- be able to offer encouragement and make constructive comments
- have patience, understanding handlers' difficulties and be able to problem solve
- the importance of understanding when a handler is not 'getting it' – taking responsibility for it and adjusting to the needs of the individual

'I am very passionate about helping develop a good relationship between dog and handler...' (Respondent)

Current classes/activities

The survey respondents are currently involved in:

Class obedience/agility/ rally o/PDM/CGC etc	Day	Time (start- finish)	Level eg Foundation/ Beginners/Novice	Comment
PDM	Monday	6.30-7.15pm	Beginners	On call as required
CGC	Monday	6.30-7.15pm	Foundation	On call as required
CGC	Monday	7.20-8.20pm	All levels as required	
Agility	Wednesday	6pm-8pm	All levels	
Obedience	Sunday	10am-1pm	Novice	
Rally O	Sunday	10am-12.30pm	All levels	Appreciate handlers willingness to help each other
Agility	Sunday	11am-3pm	All levels	

NB: It has been reported that since several people are involved in collaborative agility training on Wednesday nights this group would engage in a focus group-type activity to consider the discussion points in this survey and this could be added to an updated report at a later date.

Suggestions for Classes/Activities to be introduced to the club

Class obedience/agility/ rally o/PDM/CGC etc	Day	Time (start- finish)	Level eg Foundation/ Beginners/Novice	Comment (eg why?)
Introduction to competitive Obedience	?	6-6.30pm		May help more people get into this sport
Agility	Weekend	All day	All levels	Would love to run a workshop
Agility			Foundation & Flatwork, Fitness and jump conditioning	I don't think there is enough foundation work done before dogs are put at equipment - especially the contacts and weaves, and teaching jump technique.

Satisfaction with the role of instructor/leader:

Most of the survey respondents expressed satisfaction (*Most of the time* or *Always*) in their roles as instructors, including enjoying the interaction with other owner and their dogs. One expressed a personal view that, through no fault of anyone or anything else's '...I don't like teaching much.' Another reported some frustration at instructor colleagues offering training advice during classes. One instructor felt '...I could do better' and another loved taking classes but felt '...jaded and (in need of) inspiration.'

Rating	Rarely - it's a drag!	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always - love it!
	1	2	3	4
Number/9	1		5	3

'It's always a pleasure to teach others and see the difference in the handler and dog...' (Respondent)

What works well for instructors/leaders with WDTA?

Instructors noted the following as what worked well for them:

- working and training with a group of people that:
 - enjoyed the class
 - were at a stage where they could critique each other
- having a 'back up' or support person – especially for example where there may be a dog or handler needing extra one on one
- communication
- getting positive feedback and appreciation
- being personally rewarded by seeing the improvement in handlers and dogs, especially those that may have needed extra support
- an appreciation of the organisation involved in supporting instructors with new classes having all the necessary information needed for new classes
- setting out sequences for training

What could make the role as instructor/leader better?

Responses were:

- increasing the number of instructors/assistants so that instructors could take time off without having to cancel classes
- rotating instructors
- training (as an instructor) that could include:
 - financial support for courses, seminars and conferences
 - meeting up with other trainers/instructors to share ideas – to refresh and learn
- visiting other clubs to see how they train
- processes for 'continuation', that is, levels of training so that people and dogs can progress
- a 'curriculum' that has clear (written) objectives and lesson plans
- a review of the structure of classes for new members in agility
- kits for instructors

Suggestions for improving WDTA training/activities/member recruitment WDTA

NB: Some of the suggestions below have come from the 'Any other comments' section of the survey

Instructors made these suggestions:

Training

- involve handlers in the running of the practice rings in obedience – 'pretend' judges, learn to call a course...
- buddy training – so handlers still actively participating while someone else is getting personal instruction
- less emphasis on competition – especially for newcomers
- beginners training (agility)
- structured 'curriculum' and classes that are planned
- ensuring instructors, especially within disciplines, meet regularly

Activities

- regular CGC assessments (see below)
- run more club days
- finding people to do so the club could offer:
 - a “tricks” or HWTM class
 - a tracking class
 - a WDT class
- find ways to help members become more aware of all the different things they can do with their dog – e.g. a new sport called treibball, disk dogs, nosework fun, etc.

Member recruitment and retention

- review membership fee structure
- introduce of regular CGC assessments would encourage responsible ownership, an income stream for the club and raise its profile – especially with WDC. The public can be assessed without being members, but it may encourage them to join. With a local assessor there would be little in the way of expenses to run the assessments.
- communicate between members and committee to ensure classes are being offered that are wanted
- promote our events online and in social media
- more proactive advertising – especially at events around Whangarei
- exploring the possibility of training under a roof

Suggestions/recommendations

- review membership and fee structure
- provide training for trainers
- review process for progressions – levels – within each discipline
- develop a recruitment and promotion strategy

‘We offer a very diverse collection of disciplines which is wonderful. We need to continue to encourage the development of the wonderful bond between a dog and the humans they share their life with.’ (Respondent)

Appendix 1

Links to bios for trainers/experts noted as useful by the instructors.

Terry Ryan

<http://www.legacycanine.com/#!terrys-bio/ck6j>

Ian Dunbar

<http://www.dogstardaily.com/blogger/4>

Pia Silvani

<http://www.piasilvani.com/#!about/c20r9>

John Rogerson

<http://www.johnrogerson.com/aboutjohn.html>

Steve White

<http://www.proactivek9.com/about/>

Susan Garrett

<http://www.clickerdogs.com/susangarrett.htm>

Greg Derrett

<http://www.ultimateagility.com/about-us/>

Kamal

<http://eastlondondogtraining.co.uk/about/>