

## Your Smart Dog

### Get Ready to Have Fun: AKC Allows Mixed Breeds

#### May 2009

About three weeks ago, the American Kennel Club (AKC) Board of Directors voted unanimously to allow mixed breed dogs to compete in mixed breed classes at stand-alone AKC agility, obedience and rally events. **This is great news to anyone out there (like me) who has a mixed breed dog. Until now, we've been very limited in the events we could participate in with our (mixed breed) dog.** "Our goal in creating a program specifically designed for mixed breeds is to share our passion for dogs and our sport," said AKC President and CEO Dennis Sprung.

The [new program for mixed breed dogs](#) will be put into practice in three phases. *Phase 1:* Starting on October 1, 2009 mixed breed dog owners can begin enrolling their dogs to receive an AKC ID number. *Phase 2:* If your dog is registered with the AKC as a mixed breed dog, you can compete in mixed breed classes beginning April 1, 2010. *Phase 3:* The third phase will offer a dedicated Web site where dog owners can interact via an online community with discussion forums, and more.

**In the past, the only activity in which mixed breeds were allowed to compete has been the Canine Good Citizen and the new S.T.A.R. Puppy programs.** Allowing mixed breed dogs to compete in AKC events opens up a new world to those of us with mixed breed dogs. Take a look at the following fun dog events in which you and your mixed breed dog can participate and get started!

**[Canine Good Citizen \(CGC\) Program:](#) The CGC program is a two-part program that stresses responsible pet ownership for owners and basic good manners for dogs.** The CGC has always allowed mixed breed dogs. Before taking the Canine Good Citizen test, you'll sign the Responsible Dog Owners Pledge agreeing to take care of your dog's health needs, safety, exercise, training and quality of life. You'll also agree to show responsibility by doing things such as cleaning up after your dogs in public

places and never letting your dogs infringe on the rights of others.

After signing the Responsible Dog Owners Pledge, you and your dog are ready to take the CGC Test. There are 10 items on the test which include polite behaviors such as accepting a friendly stranger, walking on a loose leash, coming when called, and other behaviors that demonstrate your dog has good manners at home and in the community. *Smart Dog University offers both a CGC prep class and the CGC test at least once a year.*

**[The AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy<sup>sm</sup>](#) is a new program offered by the AKC designed to get dog owners and their puppies off to a good start. The S.T.A.R. stands for Socialization, Training, Activity, and Responsibility.** All puppies are welcome to participate in the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy Program including purebreds and mixed breeds. The AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy Program is an incentive program for loving dog owners who have taken the time to take their puppies through a basic training class. To earn the S.T.A.R. Puppy, you and your puppy need to attend a puppy or basic training class for at least six weeks. The AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy test is given by your instructor at the end of the course. The S.T.A.R. Puppy test has 20 components, some of which apply to the dog owner and others that apply to the puppy. *Smart Dog University offers the S.T.A.R. Puppy program through it's Canine Building Blocks program.*

**[Agility](#) – A fun and exciting dog sport, agility is an athletic event that requires conditioning, concentration, training and teamwork.** You and your dog negotiate an obstacle course racing against the clock. There are three types of AKC agility: Standard (includes the dog walk, A-Frame, and Teeter), Jumpers with Weaves (only has jumps, tunnels, and weave poles), and



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Fifteen And Send Time (FAST) which tests the handler and dog team's strategy, skill, accuracy, speed and handling at a distance.

**Rally** - AKC Rally is a relatively new dog sport that can be a helpful stepping stone from the AKC Canine Good Citizen® program to the world of obedience or agility. Rally is fun for both you and your dog. You and your dog move at your own pace, negotiating a course of designated stations (10 - 20, depending on the level). Each of these stations has a sign providing instructions regarding the skill that is to be performed at that station. You are encouraged to talk to your dog (cheering, encouraging, praising) . Unlike traditional obedience, perfect heel position is not required. There should be a sense of teamwork between the you and your dog. The objective of rally is to have a dog has been trained to behave in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. No corrections are allowed. Smart Dog University plans to offer a Rally course later in the year.

**Obedience** – There are three levels of obedience competition: novice, open, and utility. Each level requires you and your dog to master a specific skill set, with increasing difficulty, before advancing to the next level. Accuracy and precision are essential in this sport. Also important is your natural movement and the willingness and enjoyment of your dog.

Novice Class demonstrates good canine companion skills such as heeling, both with and without a leash, coming when called, standing for a simple physical examination, and staying in both a sit and a down position with a group of dogs. In Novice Class, dogs earn an AKC Companion Dog (CD) title after receiving a qualifying score under three different judges.

Open Class is more challenging as more exercises are done off leash and retrieving and jumping challenges are added. In Open Class, dogs earn an AKC Companion Dog Excellent (CDX) title after receiving a qualifying score under three different judges.

Utility Class, which includes scent discrimination, directed retrieves, jumping and silent signal exercises, is the most challenging class. In Utility Class, dogs earn an AKC Utility Dog (UD) title after receiving qualifying scores from three different judges.

**Hopefully, the new mixed breed program offered by the AKC will open new avenues to you and your dog.** I am tremendously excited and hope to compete with our mixed breed, Nemo, next year. We've got less than a year before competitions with mixed breeds begin – we've got to get practicing! If you've got questions about the new mixed breed program, drop me a line. I'm happy to help.

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