

Agility Trials – Ring Captain Description

Someone asked if I would summarize what the job of an agility ‘ring captain’ entails. I am not sure of the ‘Official’ job description, but this is what I’ve learned and believe are best practices from my time spent as ring captain.

Plan to arrive 45 minutes to an hour before the official start of the trial (that’s usually around 6:30-7:00 a.m.) and **stay until the trial is over**. Ideally, someone from the trial committee will save you a good, convenient spot to crate your dog(s) or you were there for setup the previous day and secured a spot (hint, hint – trial committee please take notice!). If there is another ring captain and you’re there for setup, try to secure them a spot as well.

Set Up – Each Day:

1. When you arrive, check the following:
 - a. Are chairs in the ring for all volunteers (usually 3-4 for ring crew, 2 for timer/scribe, 1 ‘leash chair’, and 1 for leash runner (optional) **and** are they clean and dry? No one wants to sit in a wet chair or one that’s covered in dirt from the arena.
 - b. Is there a table for the timer/scribe and is it clean and dry?
 - c. Are the timers and equipment in the ring and turned on (be sure to check at first and last obstacle)? These are typically turned off every night and course builders don’t always turn them on when building.
 - d. Is the ‘ring box’ in the ring? The ring box holds pens, clipboard, and usually the score sheets for at least the first class (sometimes score sheets for all classes are in there).
 - e. Are the volunteer boards up and filled out with the classes for each ring?
 - f. If you’re using gate sheets, check to see if the gate sheet board is up and post the gate sheets for the first class.
 - g. Do course maps need to be posted? If so, ask the secretary where (s)he wants them placed
2. On day 1 – when you get a chance and the judge isn’t busy – introduce yourself to the judge. On day 2 you’ll likely have another judge – introduce yourself to that judge as well. During the day, occasionally check in with the judge to see if everything is going okay. Ask if they need anything (a water for example).
3. Whichever ring you’re ‘assigned’ to (hopefully not both) is your main responsibility. That’s not to say that you don’t have to do anything for the other ring – being a ring captain is a tag team effort and you work closely with your co-captain to ensure both rings have the volunteers they need for each class. Usually both you and your co-captain are running a dog or dogs so try to be aware of that and step in so the other person can get their run in without stressing about getting their volunteer board filled.

During the trial:

1. Before each class and throughout the day - check volunteer board for empty slots and make announcements to try to get them filled. It's okay to beg, cajole or try to shame people into volunteering – whatever it takes to keep the classes filled, the judge happy and the trial moving. 😊 ALWAYS, ALWAYS, say thank you to your volunteers and ALWAYS be as nice as you can to all exhibitors regardless of whether they volunteer or not – you don't know their story or why they won't or can't volunteer.
2. Make sure to pay your workers – preferably before the class starts (hint:, it's very helpful to wear a small fanny pack if you have one to hold worker bucks so you have them at hand – just don't forget to take it off when you're running your dog!).
3. If you can, once your ring is running, check in with your volunteers – especially as the day goes on – to see if they would like a water or if they need anything – ask them if they are okay. Sometimes people sit down to volunteer and then realize halfway through the class they need a bathroom break. You may have to sit in for them for a bit or find a replacement worker.
4. Stay near the rings! You can't go on a long walk and expect everything to keep going as planned. Sometimes there are raffles to handle too. Answer a million and one questions, sometimes it's not something you know but you'll need to know who to ask. Train new folks how to do the jobs. Fill in for jobs you can't get filled.
5. As each class ends, mark through the class so people can keep up with what volunteer slots are available and sign up.
6. Let volunteers know that if they are working the height or class before they run, we are happy to move their dogs in the running order to make sure they have time to warm up/potty their dogs before they run.

Break down at the end of each day:

1. Turn off all timers and electronic equipment – move timer equipment on the scoring table to a secure place where it won't get damaged or wet.
2. If the ring is going to be dragged, move all chairs and tables out of the ring and move the gate board away from the ring area.
3. Take the 'Ring box' to the secretary's table.
4. Get volunteer board cleaned off – fill in classes for the next day and go ahead and add names for people who signed up before the trial if you have them.