

Making local groups modern and fit for the future



Dear SV Members and Athletes,

For some time now, dog sport and club culture have been subject to changing times, just as society as a whole and the way people choose to spend their free time changes.

With the end of the Covid, the active local groups started their tournaments with hope, only to realise a little later that the 'run' on their events was no longer as great as it was before the pandemic. Whereas sports tournaments used to be a sure guarantee of important sources of income, many tournaments now had to be cancelled due to lack of demand or had to be held

with significantly fewer participants. This clearly shows that a dramatic change is taking place. At the same time, the availability of 'agility halls' is exploding, which now exist almost everywhere and offer tournaments all year round in addition to weather-independent training. In addition, all VDH qualifying events for the European Championships and World Championships also take place on artificial turf in these halls.

Thus, an infrastructure has developed where every interested athlete can simply book trainer lessons and train all year round without being active in a local group. The courses developed and optimised by online trainers during the pandemic also offer beginners access to training, meaning that even the basics can be learned outside our club structures.

These problems can also be found in other dog sports clubs, which means that we have to seriously think about the future of the club structure. Podcasts on agility criticise the acute lack of young people, as top-level sport is based on a broad grassroots foundation. When activity at the grassroots level collapses, this is an alarming sign that endangers entire structures in the medium term.

Individual performance levels are at a peak in training and sport, yet this is rarely achieved within traditional club structures, but more often in training groups or with professional trainers.

For all local groups, the competitive pressure of events is noticeable, and it should be mentioned that special events, which are planned and realised with a lot of enthusiasm, continue to be very popular. Agility used to be considered 'fun', and the SV team competitions, such as the Germany Cup, the Regional League and the National League, enjoyed great popularity. The local groups trained together, and the tournaments were celebrated as events in the group.

Since we cannot and do not want to turn back time, we have to accept the situation and actively tackle the new challenges.

The advantages of our club structure are social structures, widespread availability and a broad grassroots foundation. With modern training methods, expert trainers and existing infrastructure, clubs are an attractive alternative to dog sports centres. To keep things that way, new concepts are needed. The central issue is modern training for trainers. If this is done once a year by the local groups, it creates a win-win situation for both sides. Local groups retain expert trainers, who in turn ensure member loyalty through their expertise and at the same time see their work appreciated. If there is good camaraderie and openness in the club as well, the response will be positive.

Yours truly,

Björn Bröker,
SV Sport Representative