



Right  
Turn

## RALLY O

By Cynthia Jameson



Rally Obedience is a sport that involves techniques similar to equine dressage. It involves heeling, turns, and pivots, and lots of stuff in between. There are currently THREE levels in both APDT & AKC that you can earn titles. Association Of Pet Dog Trainers APDT offers Rally trials, as well as the AKC beginning January 2005. Basically Rally Obedience is a cross between traditional obedience, freestyle (some of the exercises look like they were taken from that sport), and agility (because every course is different, a unique design).

The APDT (Association of Pet Dog Trainers) conference held the very first Rally trials in September 2001. Rally-O is judged similarly to obedience, but the main difference is that with APDT Rally-O mixed breeds are allowed to compete. AKC held their Rally trials in mid 2003, and has been holding Rally as a non-regular class at trials since 2002. In both APDT and AKC Rally, you can talk to your dog and praise him all around the course. In addition, in APDT Rally you can give your dog treats and pet him in between exercises. Each course is different, and consists of numbered signs that give directions for what to perform at each location; everyone gets a chance to walk the course without their dog prior to running it. Level One (or AKC Novice level) is performed on leash; Level Two (or AKC Advanced level) is performed off leash.

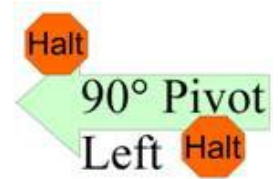
At Level One the dog is on-leash through novice style exercises. Level Two has the dog off-leash through more advanced exercises, including at least one jump set at eight inches, 14 inches, or 20 inches according to the dog's height at the withers. Either level may be timed or non-timed as stated in the premium list for that show or trial.

As in agility, each course is different every time and a layout is posted at ringside; handlers are also given a printed copy of the course and can walk it without their dogs prior to the start of the class. Ring size is roughly twice that of the 35-foot by 50-foot utility ring and accommodates 12-15 stations for level one and 15-18 obstacles for level two. A total of 58 different obedience style maneuvers are approved for use that the dog and handler must perform together. These signs are placed at each station gives instructions to the dog-handler team, and each team must execute the station's particular task within 2-4 feet of the sign. Once the judge gives the command "forward," the dog and handler complete the course on their own without further commands from the judge, except for "exercise finished" at the end of the course. Handlers may do anything to encourage their dogs except physically touch them or make corrections with the leash. Signs will instruct teams to go fast or slow, to halt (dog must sit at heel), to make turns and circles, to reverse direction, to do a sit-stay-recall, or other basic obedience exercises. In non-timed courses, each team has a starting score of 200 points from which points are deducted for such faults as missed or incompletely performed stations, touching the dog, leash corrections, etc. The team with the highest score (i.e., fewest number of faults) wins first place, followed by the next highest score for second place, and so forth.

The course time is decided by the judge based on a slow walk through of the course with three seconds added for every sit, down, front, finish or stand. The team's course running time is a total of the actual time plus the number of faults incurred. Competitors are scored using the time it takes them to complete the course. Any faults add seconds to the run time. A missed or incorrectly performed station can add ten seconds. Three seconds are added each time you retry a station, touch



the dog, leash correct, knock over a cone, lose control or have a behaviour problem. The team with the best run time wins first place followed by the next best run time for second place, etc. Non-regular class ribbons are awarded for the placements, but qualifying scores are not counted towards a title.



Rally obedience can also be non-timed and is scored like obedience, with points deducted from an out of 200. Some obedience people have reservations about the sport. They feel there is too much dog-handler interaction and all the talking and extra commands can confuse a young dog that hasn't matured in the obedience ring. Most handlers love it because it has challenges of its own, including no mental breaks as you progress through the course. Dogs need to have a solid attention span and focus and enough stamina to get through the course. Well trained and Well-heeled obedience dogs will do very well in this sport. Many dogs enjoy this change from the usual silent heeling of traditional obedience as their owners can clap hands, talk, whistle (even sing!) to them throughout the entire course without penalty. Those who participate in agility trials will recognize the pre-class "walk-throughs" and the challenge of working with their dog partners in an almost dance-like flow from one station to another.

### RALLY O Sample Course

