Motion:

The minimum age of dogs allowed to compete in flyball competitions should be raised to 18 months.

Reason given in support of motion:

Veterinary sports medicine has progressed significantly in the last 15 years and specialist veterinarians and therapists in the field are now recommending that we wait until our dogs are fully developed before beginning the high-impact aspects of our sport, like jumps and flyball box turns. As the vast majority of dogs are not finished developing at 12 months and still have open growth plates, we place unnecessary stress on their developing joints by racing them at this age, putting them at high risk of injury and setting them up for future issues like early-onset arthritis and joint breakdown. The AFA states in its rules and policies that it is inhumane to race a dog under the age of 12 months, however, for dogs to be ready to race right on 12 months of age, they usually will have had to be training for many months prior to this, including doing full flyball runs.

Both NAFA and the FCI have already raised their minimum ages and most high-impact dog sports in Australia have had their minimum age set at 18 months for many years now.

Please find letters from veterinary sports medicine specialists, Dr Chris Zink (Veterinary Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Group & Zink Integrative Sports Medicine - USA) and Dr Malcolm Ware (The Vet Practice & Canine Orthopaedics Sport Medicine Centre – Melbourne) and canine myofunctional therapist, Sacha Packer (The Balanced Canine – Sydney) who regularly treat flyball dogs.