

# Australian Flyball Association Inc.



AUSTRALIAN  
FLYBALL  
ASSOCIATION

## Information Pack

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## WHAT IS FLYBALL?



Flyball racing is a relay race between two teams; each team has four dogs racing in a heat, with up to two reserve dogs eagerly awaiting their turn, 'they could get their chance in the next heat'. There can be 3 or 5 heats to a race.

There are two racing lanes set up with as little as a 10 foot space between each lane. In the centre of the racing lanes there is a set of drag racing lights waiting to do the count down for the start of each heat. When the last light turns green the dogs are off and racing (they mustn't cross the start/finish line until the light is green otherwise they receive a foul).

They must run as fast as they can for the first 51foot of the course, they will have to jump four hurdles one by one (hurdle height is set at 5 inches lower than the shoulder height of the smallest dog in the team, minimum of 7 inches and maximum of 14 inches) spaced 10 feet apart then 15 foot from the last hurdle is a flyball box with a tennis ball in it. The dogs leap onto the box to do a swimmers turn and at the same time the box releases the ball which the dog has to catch on the run. The dog then races as fast as they can back over the 4 hurdles to its handler who is usually jumping up and down, waving arms above their head encouraging their dog all they way. As soon as the first dog crosses the start/finish line with it nose the next dog is off and racing. Missed jumps and dropped balls require the dog to rerun the course after the rest of the team has finished.

The first team to have all four of their racing dogs complete their run cleanly wins the heat.

Flyball is a sport in which any dog can participate regardless of breed, shape, size or formal training. It encompasses all things dogs love, chasing, jumping, catching, retrieving, competing and striving to please their owners.



Unlike any other dog activity to date flyball is pure fun for everyone, the dogs, the handlers and the spectators. Spectators are encouraged to applaud, laugh and even scream as they cheer on their favourite team.

Just looking at the dogs waiting for their turn to run and trying for all the world to sound like banshee's, or just the look of sheer exhilaration on the dogs' faces (including some handlers we know). All this tells the story of how much they enjoy the sport of flyball.

Flyball does not interfere with obedience training. In fact, the sport reinforces the disciplines taught in obedience class.

If you would like to spend an hour or so of quality time with your pet once a week and you feel the desire for an adrenalin rush, then why not give it a go.

## THE HISTORY OF FLYBALL

Flyball began in North America in the early 1970's when Californian Herbert Wagner developed the first tennis ball launcher. Through demonstrating the sport at his obedience graduations he was invited to demonstrate this new game for dogs on 'The Johnny Carson Show'.

This revolutionary new idea was first taken up in the Toronto and Detroit areas and, after a few small Competitions at Dog Shows, the first ever full on flyball competition was held in 1983.

Interest spread across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Europe. Now in North America Britain, South Africa, Japan and Australia there are more than 50000 dogs competing.

Here in Australia the earliest flyball activity we know of occurred in Perth in 1982. Ever since then, small groups have been demonstrating and competing in the sport all over Australia.

# THE AUSTRALIAN FLYBALL ASSOCIATION INC. (AFA)

## Development

With no organisation having stepped forward to bring these groups together, Flyball had remained a demonstration only activity.

In an effort to bring groups together a number of meetings were held in Queanbeyan NSW and were attended by several canine clubs from the NSW and ACT regions. These meetings lead to the formation of the Australian Flyball Association on the 13 October 1996.

Discussion centered on the need for communication between the ever growing band of flyball enthusiasts over the whole of Australia, who had no avenue of communication to develop the sport of flyball in their regions and nationally.

It was also felt that there was a need for uniform rules and Judging for the conduct of flyball competitions, eventually leading to sanctioned events based on the internationally accepted rules set down by the North American Flyball Association (NAFA). These Rules have been amended and updated to suit Australian conditions.

The object of the AFA is to promote responsible dog ownership through the sport of flyball and to promote co-operation and good sportsmanship in the sport of Flyball through its committees, rules and policies, tournaments and other activities.

Flyball is an enormously spectacular spectator sport that can be used to promote responsible dog ownership. When the general public sees how much fun the dogs and handlers are having, it makes it much easier to encourage these people to become involved in organised dog activities, such as flyball, obedience and agility. This process can make the promotion of responsible dog ownership much easier.

## Principal Activities of the AFA

The principal activities of the AFA are:

- Control the development of the sport of Flyball in Australia and maintain the Rules for Flyball racing.
- Encourage the formation of Clubs and Teams.
- Sanction the conduct of flyball competitions and Demonstrations.
  - Maintain a data base of results of sanctioned competitions.
- Issue AFA awards and titles.
- Through:
  - promoting community awareness of responsible dog ownership and the sport of flyball;
  - fostering interest in the training of companion dogs and to make the handling of trained dogs popular;
  - promoting and undertaking activities in connection with competitions, demonstrations and training;

# GETTING STARTED

## How to Start a Team or Club

What do we have to do to start a flyball team/club?  
How do we get people involved?  
What equipment do we need?  
Where do we get the equipment?  
How do we train our dogs?  
What do we do after we start a club?

These are a few of the more important questions that you need to consider when starting up a flyball team/club. We are hoping that the following information will help with ideas and assist you in making the process of starting flyball a simple and enjoyable one.

If you are already a Dog Obedience Club or a Dog Club of any sort you will have to take into consideration your own club policies with concern to Flyball. A number of established dog clubs in the NSW/ACT/VIC areas have formed a sub-committee for flyball, from the enthusiasts that wish to participate in the sport.

## Starting From Scratch with No Club to Assist You

If you wish to start a team, you will need at least four dogs to compete in flyball competitions. A team can join and participate in AFA events without being part of any canine club, as long as each member of the team is a member of the AFA.

You will have to decide where to train your dogs and consider some form of insurance in case of mishap. Membership of the AFA can ensure that your new team has Public liability Insurance cover for its activities.

If at a later date you increase the number of participants in your team to form another team or more, you may find it necessary to form a committee and club of your own, to assist with the organising and training of the Flyballers.

Don't forget that one of the most important members of any team is the box loader and every team needs one.

If you have any questions in this regard get contact the AFA Regional Representative in your area via email for assistance:

ACT – [act@flyball.org.au](mailto:act@flyball.org.au) -  
NSW – [nsw@flyball.org.au](mailto:nsw@flyball.org.au) -  
QLD – [qld@flyball.org.au](mailto:qld@flyball.org.au) -  
SA – [sa@flyball.org.au](mailto:sa@flyball.org.au) -  
TAS – [tas@flyball.org.au](mailto:tas@flyball.org.au) -  
VIC – [vic@flyball.org.au](mailto:vic@flyball.org.au)

# EQUIPMENT NECESSARY AND EXTRA EQUIPMENT

## Balls

It is very important that you choose the correct size ball for your dog. Tennis balls or any soft ball that bounces and rolls may be used. Baby tennis balls are now available in various sizes for the little mighty mutts.

A regular supply of tennis balls will be required as punctured balls are not allowed to be used in racing. Secondhand balls can often be purchased cheaply from tennis clubs.

## Jumps

The jumps are a set size and a basic design, which, is included at the back of the information pack for any handy person to make. You will need four jumps. They have to be a standard colour of white on the inside of the sideboard and the cross board. But you may paint the outside of the sideboard a different colour or use it for sponsor advertising.

Most clubs with two sets of jumps will use their club colours, for example; one set will be blue and one set red. Then at demos and comps the spectators know who is racing in the blue lane and who is racing in the red lane. This helps the spectators know what is going on and they can barrack for which ever team they like.

The AFA requires that Jump slats are made from flexible PVC foam board which bends and gives if hit by a dog.

The pattern for Jump design is included at the back of the information pack.



## Flyball Boxes

There are various styles of boxes from which a team/club can choose. As long as they comply with the AFA Rules of measurement and are mechanically set off, they can be of any design. Designs are available from the Flyball Homepage on the Internet.





## Electronic Judging System

The AFA has two different sorts of electronic judging systems and each system includes starting lights. These systems are available to any affiliated club for a sanctioned competition free of charge. However, the host club is responsible for the transportation of the system to and from the venue.

### FarmTek System



FarmTek Start Gates    Start Lights    Time Display board    Operating console

### EJS System



The EJS does not have a display board for times    EJS console



## **DEMONSTRATIONS**

Demonstrations are an important part of flyball recruitment. They are fun to watch at any event. Dog shows and other canine events are a great place to start doing demonstrations.

More importantly flyball can be done by anyone with a dog--so why not try doing demonstrations at School Fete's, Agricultural Shows, Royals or any other place where you have large numbers of the general public. A large number of these people have dogs in their backyards that are doing nothing and flyball is an excellent way to get them involved in dog activities and train the handlers in responsible dog ownership. You will also increase your club numbers assisting your teams to become more competitive.

If possible, it is also a good idea to have two teams racing each other, to give the spectators an idea of the atmosphere around flyball, so they can plainly see that the dogs really enjoy the racing aspect of flyball.

One of the most important things in a demonstration is to have a good PA system and commentator as this helps the spectators to know what is going on. It also helps create an enthusiastic crowd by getting them to cheer for the team or dog of their own choice.

You can also have match races, which is one on one racing between two dogs. This is a way of demonstrating the speed of individual dogs. Another important aspect of demonstrations is to have a few pamphlets or business cards from your club to hand out to interested spectators. They then know where to go if they decide they would like to have a go at flyball with their own dogs.

It is important to take your beginner dogs that are nearly ready for competition along to demonstrations, this enables them to get used to the crowds and the noise. It also shows the spectators the beginning stages of racing. It can also supply many good laughs for everybody

## **THE RACE TRACK**

To make the racing lanes a safe environment for the dogs, handlers and especially the spectators, you will need to fence off the area of the race course. This keeps spectators behind the fence and out of harms way. It is also a good idea to continue the fencing area 60 feet (20 meters) back behind the start/finish line to give the racing teams' room to move and run.

It is also a good idea to have a fenced off marshalling area near the entrance of the ring.

You will need a barrier at the box end of the racing lanes to stop dogs knocking any balls out of the ring. If you do not have backboards available to you we have found that hessian is a good barrier for this purpose.

# DIVISIONS AND COMPETITIONS

## Divisions

At competitions clubs run races in divisions. When you enter a competition you are placed into a Division based on your Teams seed time.

The fastest teams are put into Division 1 and the slower teams are put into Division 2, Division 3 and so on. This enables every team to have a fair go and be competitive in their Division.

All Divisions except Division 1 have a break out rule. This is covered in section 1.4 of the Rules and Polices of the Australian Flyball Association Inc.

## Competition Rules

This is covered thoroughly in the AFA Rules. These can be obtained from the AFA Website. All new Members receive a copy of the AFA Rules at joining. Members can also purchase a copy for a small fee.

## AFA Titles

The AFA will, upon application, award the following titles to affiliated flyball dogs. Dogs will receive Title Certificates and for the more advanced Titles, pins:

- Flyball Dog (FD) to any dog receiving 5 points.
- Flyball Dog Excellent (FDX) to any dog receiving 20 points.
- Flyball Dog Champion (FDCh) to any dog receiving 50 points.
- Australian Flyball Champion (AFCh) to any dog receiving 150 points.
- Flyball Dog Master (FM) for any dog receiving 400 points.
- Flyball Dog Master Excellent (FMX) for any dog receiving 700 points.
- Flyball Dog Master Champion (FMCh) for any dog receiving 1000 points.
- the "Onyx" Plaque, name after its first recipient, for any dog receiving 1300 points.
- Flyball Dog Grand Champion (FDGCh) Plaque, for any dog receiving 2000 points.
- the Jeddah Award, named after its first Australian recipient, for any dog receiving 3000 points.
- the Ezri Award , named after the first Australian recipient , for any dog receiving 4000 points.

The AFA now has available (instead or in addition to certificates and pins) a plaque that you can add engraved shields to as you qualify for new titles.

## TRAINING TIPS

The AFA training tips are - you have to read a few books. Every dog is different to train and for each team/club it is best for them to gain their own knowledge.

A good method of teaching flyball is by using the backward chaining techniques from Karen Pryor's book "Don't Shoot the Dog".

There is no one set method for teaching or learning flyball, your best bet is to read all you can about the different methods and apply whatever method works best for your dog and team.

Remember that handlers and dogs alike will respond to positive reinforcement.

Some other books worth reading are as follows:-

On Your Mark by Michael F. Randall - This is available off the NAFA Flyball Homepage on the Internet.

There are also a number of other tips available from the Flyball Homepage on the Internet.

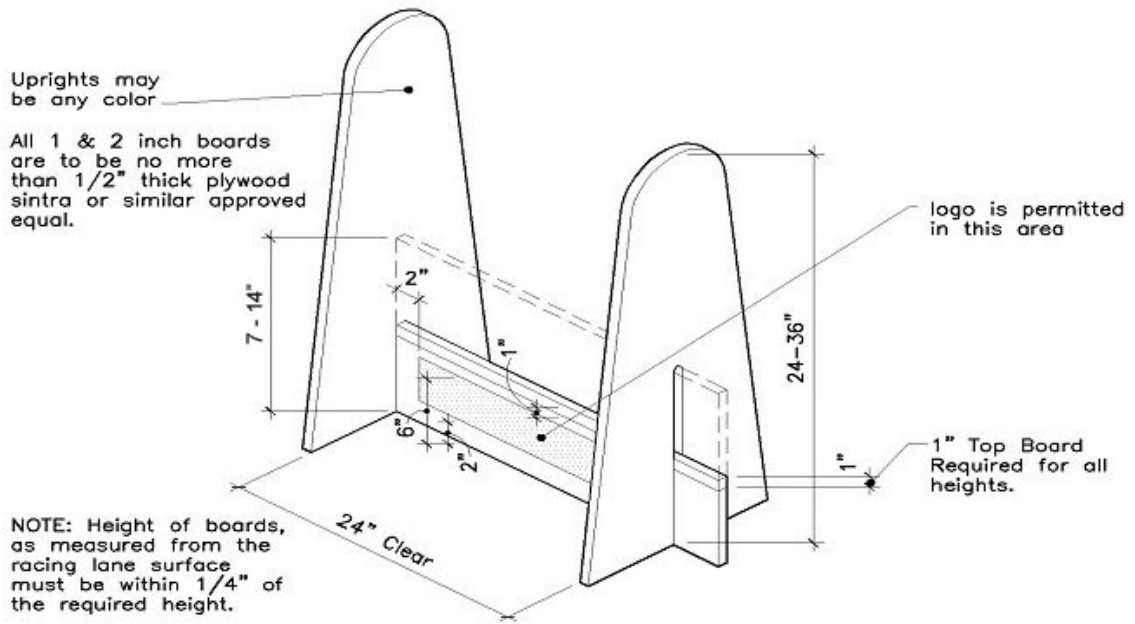
The AFA wishes to thank you for contacting it in the endeavour to find out more about this fantastic sport. We sincerely hope that this information pack will assist you in answering some of the many questions you may have and also helps you to get started in flyball.

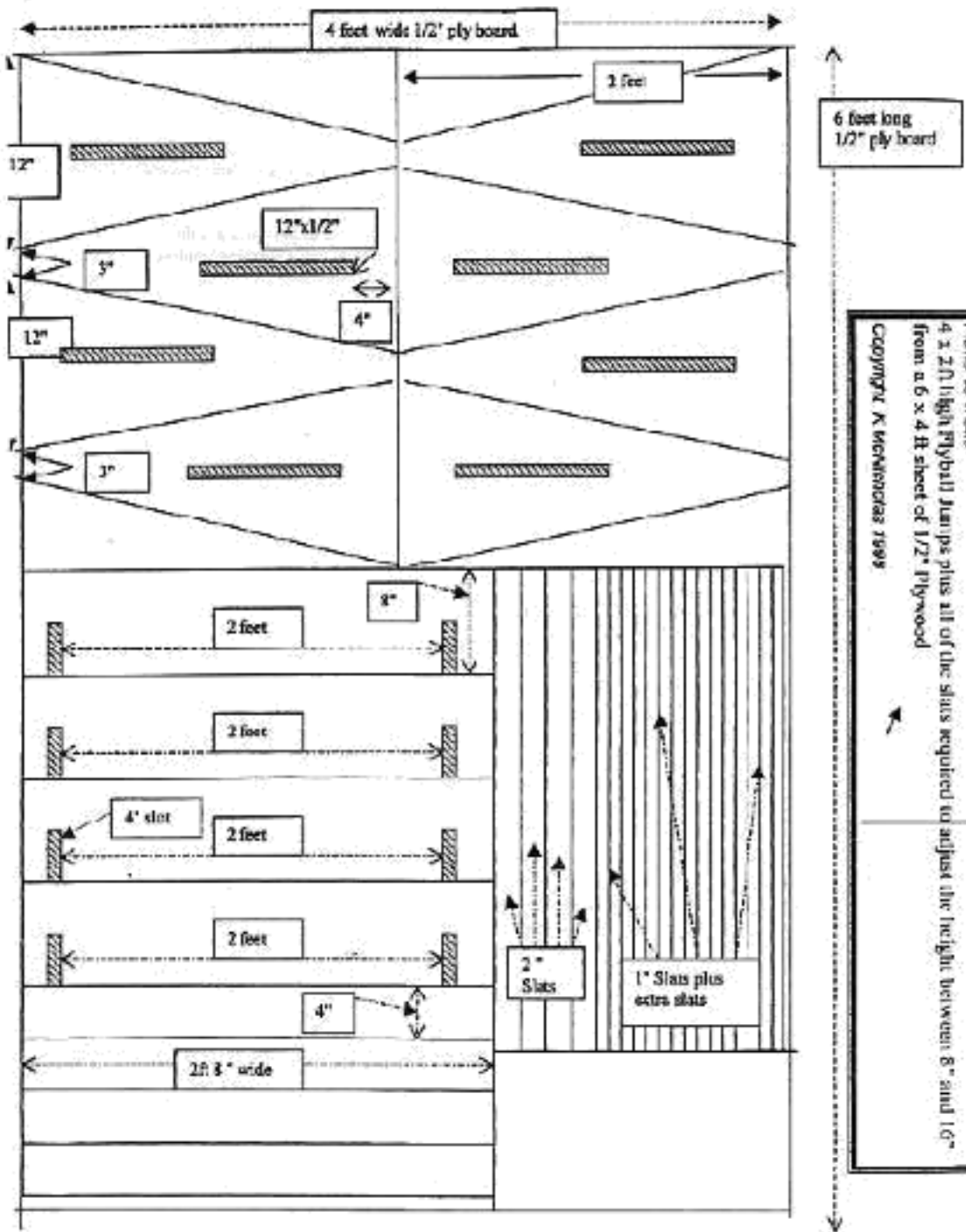



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# FLYBALL JUMP SPECIFICATIONS





 = cut 1/2" slot. Round and smooth off all edges. Put pipe insulation foam over the top slot.