

RALLY O - HINTS & TIPS

Tight Lead Penalties

A number of people in the Novice rings seem to be getting fairly heavily penalised for tight leads. And I've heard a comment to the effect that "once I am out of Novice, there is no lead so I won't get that deduction anymore".

Well ... you may not get penalised for tight lead but you will probably get a different penalty because the underlying problem will still be there.

If your dog is surging or lagging enough to give you a Tight Lead deduction, it will still probably be surging or lagging without the lead. Similarly, out of position, sniffing the ground, getting distracted by something outside the ring will all incur a penalty whether the lead is on or off.

At least some of the time, the reason is that the dog doesn't understand what's coming up. Particularly with weaves and spirals, because there are multiple changes of direction we can catch the dog unawares unless we give them some command or signal as to what's going on.

Go back to using the basic footwork to indicate that a turn is coming up. Use smaller steps when going around cones to the right (eg spirals and weaves and figure 8) like we do in an Obedience figure 8 to help the dogs keep pace with us. For left turns (eg again the spiral and weaves as well as all the left turns/pivots/circles...) use your Rear End Awareness training to keep them in position.

In Rally O we can talk to the dogs, so tell them what's happening. Where there are multiple short pieces with lots of sits (eg 1-2-3 Steps Forward), particularly in that first step/halt, tell the dog to sit because they won't be expecting to sit after just one step.

Work on your heel positioning and focus exercises from the beginning. Even if you don't want to go onto traditional Obedience, they will be a big benefit in the higher classes where you need to protect every point you can to qualify.