



East Anglia Staffordshire Bull Terrier Display Team – By Lesley McFadyen

Although not an obvious choice as an agility dog, the bold and fearless Staffordshire Bull Terrier temperament, coupled with its desire to please its owner means that courses are usually run in fast times even if equipment doesn't always survive the round intact! Stafford shape doesn't appear to fit easily around weaves, but amazingly once on a run Staffords do weave, if not as fluidly as collies. Agility Clubs around the country have Staffords training with them now, some compete, some choose not to. Obviously before beginning agility training any dog needs a reasonable level of basic obedience. It's important the dog responds well to its handler, but with such a people orientated breed that generally means they can retain good focus. Staffords, too, are usually an agile breed with a good degree of intelligence, couple that with a love of food and you have a great basis for training!

Having trained and competed in agility with her bitch, Tammy (Araidh Sweetest Taboo), Wendy Clewley, who subsequently emigrated with her dogs to Australia, was instrumental in getting together a small East Anglian Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club Agility Display Team, which was invited to give a display of Stafford Agility at Crufts 2004. A spectator later said the dogs were like 'canine bullets'. This was a huge success and led to the EASBTC holding the first ever Stafford only agility show later in 2004. The show attracted Stafford owners from around the country and resulted in a very enjoyable day for all involved. A comment made at the show: it was the first time the spectator had seen every dog leaving a ring with a smile on its face! Over subsequent years more and more Stafford owners are now seen competing at agility shows, showing how versatile the breed can be.



East Anglia Staffordshire Bull Terrier Display Team – CONTINUED

Ever aware of the negative publicity often aimed at the breed, the EASBTC has sought to promote Staffords in a positive light and taken part in displays around the area, at county fairs, other SBT breed club events and open days. One of the original team members, Jo Ann Essex, competes at top level with her two Staffords, Bacon – Javawolf Mogwai AW (G) - (Grade 7) and Mouse – Javawolf Mighty Mouse JW, AW - (Grade 7), and is a regular at our Club displays. Jo has also developed a Stafford Agility League that has 42 members in its first year, emphasizing the popularity of Staffords in agility.

In November 2011 the Kennel Club invited us once again to take part in agility displays over both days at their Discover Dogs event held in London. This time we expanded the team to include fifteen dogs, showing more diversity in terms of style and application. The displays were met with huge applause and have resulted in the team being invited to take part again at Crufts each year – a challenge we will relish. Our Display Team has developed to include not only agility but also obedience and a whole array of tricks and now has regular bookings at Crufts and Discover Dogs, and also at the CLA Game Fair and lots of other dog related and countryside events throughout the summer – showing off our wonderful dogs skills to the general public. Who knows? We may just stage another Stafford only Agility Show in the future.....



East Anglia Staffordshire Bull Terrier Display Team - CONTINUED

