

Starting on July 1, 2008, The AKC Obedience Regionals are off and running—but look who was left out!©

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Great news! The Regional competitions are back! This time around they are brought to us by the American Kennel Club (AKC). Below is the new section to be included in the new AKC Obedience Regulations.

“Chapter 12, Section 2. AKC Regional Competitions. The American Kennel Club will identify yearly the events/shows to be regional qualifying events for the next year. Events will be selected based on criteria established by the American Kennel Club Companion Events Department. Regions will be based on divisions currently established for Conformation by the American Kennel Club. The only exception will be the division containing Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, which will be combined as one Division, with separate qualification criteria to be set. For all Divisions, the top four dogs based on the qualification criteria as established by the Companion Events Department will be invited to attend the American Kennel Club National Obedience Event.

“The qualification time period for regional competitors will be from July 1 to June 30 for qualification to attend the National Obedience Invitational following the June 30 cut off date.

“For events to be identified as AKC Regional Obedience competitions:

- *1. The Selected Division event(s) must have Obedience Trials over three consecutive days. Only three consecutive Obedience Trials will be recognized as the Regional Trial. (Each Division will only have one Regional competition per year.)
- *2. Previous shows for trials at the events must have a minimum of 80-plus entries (this may vary by region).
- *3. If there are no events that meet the given requirements in a region, the Events Selection Committee can select a smaller show or allow another region to have two events.
- * Criteria for Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico may vary.

“To qualify dogs must:

- Have a UD title.
- Compete in both Open B and Utility B in all three of the shows identified as an AKC Regional Competition.
- Have a cumulative score obtained from the dog’s participation in Open and Utility at the Regional Competition.
- Be ranked from highest to lowest based on their cumulative score with 1,200 points being a perfect score.
- Qualify by cumulative score as one of the top four at one Regional Competition for an invitation to the National Obedience Invitational.

“Once a dog qualifies for the National Obedience Invitational at a regional event, any placement received at subsequent regional competitions by the same dog will not be considered for additional invitations. Invitations will be awarded to the next highest scoring dog in competition until all 4 of the region placements are awarded.

“Effective July 1, 2008”

While this is good news and a good start, the new Regionals will *only apply* to the dogs with a **Utility title**. Left out of this great opportunity to promote obedience entries are the **Novice and Open dogs, plus the Utility** competitors who may never make it to the NOI due to lack of OTCH points or placing with *combined scores* at a NOI Regional; therefore, having little incentive to enter a Regional! I am of the opinion we need to have national events for all levels of competition and not just Regionals aimed for a few National Obedience Invitational (NOI) possible invitees. This criterion alone *is too limited* and the chance to really promote obedience is lost.

We need to look into having an additional type of event for the AKC Business Plan to promote obedience. For example, host NOI Regionals, **plus** invent a new **Divisional competition** which *will include* the Novice, Open & Utility competitors. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel, but instead set-up Divisionals the same as the new AKC NOI Regionals. By doing this, the two events could run concurrently at the same shows! Running the two events may be accomplished the same way we now do combined breed specialties.

AKC Obedience Showcase Divisionals for Novice, Open & Utility

If we agree Obedience is in need of a boost at the Novice, Open and Utility levels, we must then do more to promote obedience at a national level and a level which will include the Novice, Open and Utility competitors. An Obedience Showcase Divisional event would *create and maintain interest in our sport* to the general public as well as the **majority** of exhibitors now showing. As we all know, the future of our sport lies with new novice obedience handlers *and* holding onto the ones we now have in the sport!

If we don’t do something soon to raise the interest back to basic obedience, plus promoting new competitors to go beyond Rally and Novice obedience, we will see a continuing drop in future NOI (and obedience) entries as there will be fewer and fewer Open and Utility-titled dogs. That will parlay into fewer UDXs, OTCHs, OMs & OGM titles in the future--not to mention the AKC and local clubs losing more entry dollars.

While the NOI and its new Regionals are an excellent start to showcase obedience, we need to have an additional national event to showcase the **Novice, Open and Utility teams** from around the country.

I submit the following proposal to showcase the Top Novice, Open and Utility dogs:

For the sake of a new term, let's call the new event **Obedience Showcase Divisionals (OSD)**.

To keep things simple and workable, the new Obedience Showcase Divisionals should be set up in the same format as the AKC NOI Regionals. For example:

AKC Obedience Showcase Competitions. The American Kennel Club will identify yearly the events/shows to be divisional qualifying events for the next year. Events will be selected based on criteria established by the American Kennel Club Companion Events Department. Regions will be based on divisions currently established for Conformation by the American Kennel Club. The only exception will be the division containing Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, which will be combined as one Division, with separate qualification criteria to be set. For all Divisions, the top four dogs based on the qualification criteria as established by the Companion Events Department will be invited to attend the American Kennel Club's National Obedience Showcase Competition.

The qualification time period for divisional competitors will be from July 1 to June 30 for qualification to attend the National Obedience Showcase Competition following the June 30 cut off date.

Events to be identified as AKC Obedience Showcase Divisional Competitions:

- *1. The Selected Divisional event(s) must have Obedience Trials over three consecutive days. Only three consecutive Obedience Trials will be recognized as the Obedience Showcase Divisional Trial. (Each Obedience Showcase Division will only have one Divisional competition per year.)
- *2. Previous shows for trials at the events must have a minimum of 80-plus entries (this may vary by region).
- *3. If there are no events that meet the given requirements in a region, the Events Selection Committee can select a smaller show or allow another region to have two events.
- * Criteria for Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico may vary.

To qualify dogs must:

- *Be eligible to enter the appropriate Novice, Open or Utility class.
- *Compete in all three of the shows identified as an AKC Obedience Showcase Divisional Competition.
- *Have a cumulative score obtained from the dog's participation in Divisional Competition.
- *Be ranked from highest to lowest based on their cumulative score with 600 points being a perfect score (Novice, Open, Utility) and 1,200 points being a perfect score for the dog competing in the Open and Utility classes all three days.
- *Qualify by cumulative score as one of the top four at one Divisional Competition for an invitation to the National Obedience Showcase Competition.
- *To qualify to enter an Obedience Showcase Divisional, a team would have to earn three (3) scores of 193 or better in their respective Novice, Open or Utility class.

Once a dog qualifies for the National Obedience Showcase competition at a divisional event, any placement received at subsequent divisional competitions by the same dog will not be considered for additional invitations. Invitations will be awarded to the next highest scoring dog in competition until all 4 of the divisional placements in Novice, Open and Utility are awarded.

By formatting the two events the same, the NOI Regionals and the OSDs could be held at the same event/trials. Now you have the makings for a "Super Bowl" 3-day weekend for obedience with everyone having their set of different goals to achieve! Consider the events as "exhibitor's shows" and create a friendly, congenial atmosphere during the three days of competition. The events can promote educated dog ownership, plus considerable media publicity which will attract large numbers of spectators to learn more about dog care, the benefits of an obedience trained dog, and responsible ownership.

All levels of Obedience would be showcased at the Divisionals and local interest would be inspired for the majority of competitors. Large numbers of obedience teams would now have a reachable goal to enter a Divisional and compete at their level. This type of event **is needed now** to promote obedience--an aspect now missing.

The top winners (how many to be determined) of the different Divisionals would then qualify to be invited to the **National Obedience Showcase (NOS)** competition. The NOS should be designed as a separate event competition that could be held a day prior to the NOI. Now that would be the ultimate national exposure, award and goal for the upcoming and continuing obedience competitors! Awards and suffix titles could be awarded by The American Kennel Club to the yearly top four dogs. For example the suffix titles could be, Obedience Showcase Novice (OSN), Obedience Showcase Open (OSO), Obedience Showcase Utility (OSU) and the Top National Obedience Showcase (TNOS) dog that competes in Open and Utility. The new suffix titles would follow the last obedience title in a dog's name. Keep in mind, only four titles a year would be awarded.

Would it not be nice to envision a bonus to this type of event, that being larger numbers of quality obedience classes would spring up again to meet the demand? The class goals will be to aim towards the local AKC Divisional. New people will be welcomed into the sport, having been exposed to the local Divisionals and observing the obtainable goals for the beginners. There is nothing like a reachable goal to inspire and promote a sport to the newcomers!

Entries at the local AKC Obedience Trials would escalate in **all classes** as teams worked towards their AKC Obedience Showcase Divisional three qualifying scores.

If you, too, are in favor of such an event that includes the Novice, Open and Utility levels at future **AKC Obedience Showcase Divisionals**, let Mr. Curt Curtis (AKC Director of Companion Dog Events) know how you feel. Now is the time to start the movement so roll up YOUR sleeves and get to work! We are the masses at this point in time and it is up to US to secure OUR sport's future. You may contact Mr. Curtis at cac@akc.org.