Reducing height of scale in dog working trials may help reduce potential impact on joints

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As part of the study, handlers were asked to work their dogs at three different heights, ranging from 5 feet to 6 feet.

Pressure-sensing mat technology and video analysis software was used to collect data.

The team found that when the scale height was lowered to 5’ 6” dogs had a reduced “peak vertical landing force” and less compressed joint angles upon landing.

When it was lowered further to 5 feet, dogs altered their traversing style, jumping rather than scaling, and greater compression and increased peak vertical landing force was seen.

The study showed a degree of variation among the dogs, possibly related to factors such as size, breed, age, training and experience.

Potential concern has been raised in other canine disciplines that landing forces after traversing jumps may lead to soft tissue injuries in dogs.

Despite this, there has been little research into the impact of scale height on landing force in dogs participating in working trials.

"Evidence-based approaches to canine working trials are important to ensure minimum impacts on physical health and welfare of participating dogs," said researcher Dr. Anne Carter, a canine scientist in Nottingham Trent University's School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.

She said: "The 6-foot maximum height of the working trials scale is based on arbitrary measurements and our research indicates that a reduction in the height to 5’ 6" may have positive implications for dogs training and competing in this
"We recommend that the height is reviewed to help minimize any risk which may be present, while still maintaining the level of competitive challenge."

Kathryn Mansfield, Kennel Club Secretary, added: "We welcome the findings of this research, which provide valuable insights into the potential impacts of reducing the height of scale exercise in working trials. Research like this helps us to ensure any risks for dogs taking part in and enjoying canine activities are mitigated and we will review the recommendations provided by this study thoroughly."

The study, published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, also looked at the potential impact of the long jump during trials, although no specific differences were observed in landing forces at jump lengths of 9 feet, 8 feet and 7 feet.


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