

## Canine event massage

*Just like humans our dogs benefit enormously from massage. Pre-event and post-event massage play very different but complementary roles in a dog's performance and recovery.*

### Pre-Event Massage: Warming up the engine

The goal of a pre-event massage, whether at a conformation show or a more active Agility competition, is to prepare the dog's body and mind for action. A good pre-event massage increases circulation, stimulates the nervous system, and helps activate the muscles the dog will use in its performance.

Since many dogs in New Zealand have had to travel significant distances before an event, often resulting in tight muscles and restricted range of motion, pre-event massage is essential to ensure injury prevention.

If the dog is anxious, techniques can be employed to help this anxiety and encourage a focus on the handler.

The ideal timeframe for a pre-event massage is 30 minutes to one hour before activity, so booking with your massage therapist is highly recommended. Light work and stretching is the intention for a pre-event massage which is a short and focussed session.

Pre-event massage does not replace the physical warm-up, but it gets the ball rolling for your warm-up.

### Post-Event Massage: Cooling down and recovery


Post-event massage, by contrast, is all about recovery. This is the time to slow things down and support the body's natural healing process.

Post-event massage is typically longer and more thorough than pre-event work. The goal is to flush out metabolic waste, reduce muscle tension, restore circulation, and help prevent stiffness and soreness in the hours or days following exertion.

A good post-event massage is also helpful to the dog's well-being when there is another long trip home.

Timing is important. Ideally, post-event massage should happen within a few hours after exercise and always after the dog's heart rate has returned to normal.

### Tailored for Each Dog

Every dog is different, and their massage needs will depend on their fitness level, type of activity, temperament, and health status. Always tell your massage therapist about any pre-existing health conditions. 

This is my 16th year in professional practice, 15 of which has included writing for this magazine. To mark this milestone, The Balanced Dog has booked a stall at the Purina Pro Plan 2025 National Dog Show in Rangiora. I will be on-site for all four days (25-28 September), providing massage services. Please stop by and book your dog for their pre- and post-event massage. Laser, PEMF and tuning fork therapy will be available, as needed.

