

Bring your dogs – and your running shoes to this year's East Anglian Game and Country Fair at the Costessey Showground. Everyone can get involved in all manner of activities at this popular, two-day event, not least the dog agility.

So if you think your dog can jump, dodge, weave and nip through a tunnel then maybe it's time to start practising.

We've all seen those amazing terriers and collies who are so good at the fences and obstacles in the agility class that their red-faced owners are left out of breath and far behind. So don't let your dog down!

It's great fun for everyone involved, particularly when the most unlikely looking dog blazes round the course, and naturally everyone loves it when it doesn't go quite to plan and the four-legged competitor is far more interested in sniffing spectators than running over bridges and between posts.

Andy Grand, who organises the fair with wife Tracey and Didi Fenwick, says the dog classes are just one of the highlights of the April 26 and 27 fair.

"There is so much going on and what we like is that people can get involved in different things. They can bring their dogs along for the day, they can enter the agility and dog show, they can try archery, casting a line, they can enter tree-climbing and wood-cutting competitions," he says, pointing out that the fair is one of the few large events to have such an informal atmosphere with so many have-a-go activities, including invitations for spectators to head into the grand ring to meet hounds and birds of prey.

There's a 40 bird, re-entry, clay pigeon shooting competition hosted by the High Lodge team with men's, women's and juniors' sections, meaning plenty of opportunity to have a go or pick up some improver's tips.

"We are all about a family day out, a relaxed event with lots to do and see," he said.

This is the fifth fair the Grand couple has organised and they think visitors and exhibitors are going to enjoy it even more this year, and once more it is supported by EDP Norfolk magazine.

They've been planning it virtually since the final car left the showground last April.

"We now have so much support, not just from people coming, but from trade stands and sponsors who want to be involved. It is brilliant and means we can do even more," said Andy.

The fair is now a vital part of the late spring calendar in Norfolk as people look forward to the lively weekend, many returning year after year. Improvements to the camping facilities, which include good shower blocks and an on-site convenience shop meant many people camped last year, and even more are expected to bring along their tents and caravans and make a weekend of it this year.

Andy says it's difficult to choose his favourite part of the show, although he loves seeing sunshine and masses of happy faces.

"We can't ask for more," he says.

His family, including one-year-old daughter



Dog agility is just one of the attractions visitors can get involved in at this year's Game and Country Fair. (Left) The Tigers Free Fall parachute team will get the crowd looking upwards.

Alex and three-year-old son Sam, will be among those enjoying the fun. "Sam loves the animals," said Andy. There is a good selection, too, from alpacas and goats, rabbits, reindeer, sheep and even otters this year. Besides fun rides, slides and climbing walls for the children, there will also be donkey rides adding to the country feel of the show.

Andy is looking forward to some of his favourite grand ring displays, such as the John Bidwell's Off The Hip amazing shooting exhibition, Essex Dog Display Team, a full falconry presentation and the Tigers Free Fall parachute team.

Look out, too, for horse logging, pigeon decoying, the popular sheep show, gun dog scurry, terrier racing and Meirion Owen showing off the intelligence of the border collies and the daring exploits of the Indian Runner Ducks.

New faces will include a display by the HM Prison Norwich drug dogs, who will be showing how they sniff out drugs, while World Fly Casting Champion Hywel Morgan will be multi-rod casting in the main arena. He's world champion, and makes it look far too easy!

Over in the forestry area there is expected to be fierce and exciting competition between the tree climbers and the tree cutters, who will be competing against one another – and showing off their very precise skills. Entry forms are still available on the fair website.

More than 42,000 people visited over the two days last year, most arriving early and making a whole day of it.

Most events take place on both days, except the ferret show and the terrier and lurcher show, which are just held on the Sunday.

More than 300 trade stands will be open, along with a craft marquee and top-class food halls. Winston the Singing Farmer will be performing at the main bar, while Scottish pipers will be marching around the show.

Don't forget to visit us at the EDP Norfolk stand, where there will be lots more on offer to keep you entertained ●

The East Anglian Game and Country Fair will be held at the Norfolk Showground on Saturday, April 26 and Sunday 27. Tickets are available online at www.ukgamefair.co.uk or call 0871 230 1099 (£1.85 booking fee per order). Members enjoy a front row seat as well as prioritised admission and car parking, members' enclosure and bar. Membership from £7 child, £18 adult, £39 family (two adults, three children). The Super Weekend Break Offer gives up to four people three nights' camping, plus two days' free entry to the show. Just bring your tent, camper or caravan. Book tickets online or call 01263 735828. Advance tickets are £18 family (two adults, three children), £7 adult, £2 child (aged five to 16). Advance tickets available before April 20, on gate afterwards. Gates open at 9am.