



Obedience & Rally

Suggested Best Practices for the Well-Being of Dog Sport Participants

The AKC supports each club's informed decision to reschedule, postpone or cancel their respective events, as well as supporting clubs ready to hold events in locations that are open and permit gatherings. As events resume across the country, people need to feel safe while enjoying their dog activities. The AKC urges clubs to take appropriate precautions for the benefit of their participants. Events need to be held in a manner that emphasizes the safety of participants and event officials over efficiency.

The following is a list of suggested best practices that may be helpful when planning or attending an event. Event locations, facilities and dates will differ. With a situation that is continually evolving, it is up to the clubs to determine the guidelines that best fit their event. In order to inform participants, specific guidelines established by the club should be published in the premium, club website and posted on signage/flyers at their event.

General Practices

1. Clubs, officials and participants are required to follow state, local and facility guidelines that apply to the area and site where the event is held.
2. Practice social distancing consistent with current guidelines. Avoid congregating to the extent possible.
3. Consider wearing masks when in close proximity to others. Clubs should provide masks if desired for officials, judges and volunteers.
4. Consider wearing disposable or washable gloves.
5. Have plenty of hand sanitizers placed for people to use.
6. Wash hands as frequently as possible. Have disinfecting spray at bathroom facilities for people to spray door handles (or anything else they touch).
7. If you utilize portable toilets, please ask for a hand washing station to be delivered as well.
8. Avoid shaking hands or hugging.
9. Avoid touching dogs that are not your responsibility.
10. Avoid common use pens/pencils – bring your own.
11. Disinfect surfaces in common use areas as often as possible (tables, chairs, doorknobs, etc.) Clubs and facilities may consider not providing chairs.
12. Meals – No potlucks. Avoid or stagger group lunches/dinners if possible. It is recommended that clubs supply boxed lunches for judges and volunteers. Hospitality areas should avoid community items such as salt and pepper shakers, condiments, creamers, etc. Participants should consider bringing their own lunches/drinks.
13. Parking areas – Park with increased distance between vehicles if possible. This is especially critical if handlers are required to crate from their vehicles.



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Event Planning

1. Limiting Entries

- Clubs may choose to limit trials based on the number of handlers allowed in the event space. For example, 50 people (handlers, volunteers, judges, event committee) and entries not to exceed 100 for the trial.
- If possible, schedule in shifts to reduce congregating.
- Outdoor events where people can spread out may be able to accommodate larger entries.

2. One Trial Over Two Days – In order to reduce the number of participants on site at one time, clubs may hold their trial over two days.

3. Two Trials in One Day – If more than one trial is offered per day, to minimize the gathering of people, clubs should consider holding concurrent events rather than consecutive events.

4. Scheduling

- Consider scheduling participants in specific time blocks within a class in order to reduce crowds. The Trial Secretary can assign a specific number of dogs/armbands to a time block and publish in the judging program. For example: Dogs 101-120: 9:00a.m.-10:00a.m.
- Consider establishing smaller walk through groups to allow for social distancing.
- Participants can provide cell phone numbers for the event secretary to call or text to determine if someone is absent. Likewise, the Trial Secretary could provide a cell phone number for participants to report they will be absent. This prevents waiting and may streamline the event.
- Clubs may state in the premium that when an exhibitor is done for the day, they should leave the building in order to minimize congregating.

5. Event Set-up

- For indoor trials, open the exterior doors for better air flow if possible. Where possible, encourage one-way traffic flow with marked entrance and exits.
- Have a separate table for questions located at least six feet away from the Trial Secretary table.

6. Crating

- Consider crating outside weather permitting. If the club is planning to have participants crate from their vehicles, the club may need to supply indoor crating if requested due to a participant's health needs.
- Crating should be at least six feet apart, except for "family" groups of exhibitors and dogs. If space is limited, clubs may want to request participants to not arrive earlier than 30 minutes prior to their start time. Clubs may choose a specific time for the next group of participants to move in or note they must wait until the previous group has left in order to reduce congregating.



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Event Practices

1. Social Distancing Requirements – A minimum of six foot distances around the ring(s), crating, volunteer, and Judges' and Trial Secretary areas should be established. Recommend marking spacing to identify safe distancing requirements.
 - Judge's Table – Judges may have the table at one end of the ring and the gate openings at the other end. The judge and the stewards should maintain required distancing.
 - Timer – Set up an area where only the person timing is allowed. The timer should handle the stopwatches with gloves.
 - Check-in – A separate table should be set up to allow exhibitors, one at a time, to check themselves in on the board with their own pen and pick up their armbands. This eliminates the interaction between trial workers and participants.
2. Rally Course Maps – It is suggested that judges and/or clubs do not print course copies for exhibitors, but rather encourage exhibitors to take a picture of the posted courses. The course maps for each day should be posted in a couple of different locations away from the ring area to accommodate social distancing. Additionally, Trial Secretaries may email and/or post the courses to the website as early as 6PM the evening before each trial. It is recommended that the club have a few printed copies on hand for those that cannot take photos or access the website.
3. Ring Procedure Modifications –
 - Judges, stewards and exhibitors should maintain the mandated required distancing throughout the event.
 - Suggest a chair (or two, one for the in-ring exhibitor and one for the next exhibitor) be placed inside the ring for all classes. The exhibitor will be responsible for placing the leash on the chair when entering the ring and prior to starting the course.
 - Once the course is complete, the exhibitor will be responsible for getting the leash. A steward may disinfect the chair between exhibitors. A second chair, for the next exhibitor, will allow for more efficient ring management.
 - Ribbons/Awards may be placed on a pick-up table versus handed out. The judge may announce the awards and exhibitors may pick up the awards that were laid out on a table for the class.
 - Judges, exhibitors and stewards may wear masks inside the ring.
 - Judges should sanitize their ruler after measuring any dogs.
 - Stewards should wear gloves or sanitize their hands between handling paperwork.



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Obedience Specific

- Judges may wear gloves or use hand sanitizer between examination exercises. If a judge chooses to use gloves, a new pair of gloves will be used for each dog.
- Examinations – Ensure social distancing requirements are met during examination exercises. For the Utility Moving Stand for Examination, the judge should approach the dog at a slight angle to ensure distancing requirements from handler to judge are maintained.
- Novice Group Exercise – The distance requirement should be modified to 8 feet between dogs and rows to ensure social distancing guidelines are met.
- Directed Retrieve Exercise - Consider providing a grabber for the Steward to pick up the gloves. Wipe down grabber between exhibitors.
- Scent Discrimination Exercise – The steward responsible for placing the articles may wear gloves or use hand sanitizer. Tongs, when used, should be wiped down between dogs.

Policies that Have Been Temporarily Suspended/Modified

1. Event Application Late Fees – Event application late fees are waived through the end of October. This provide clubs more flexibility in planning or rescheduling their events.
2. For events cancelled in 2020, AKC will apply Event Application fees to the club's next event of the same type.
3. Judges – The judge's assignment limitations of 30 days within 100 miles is waived until December 31, 2021.
4. Judges – The judge's assignment to judge the same classes at two obedience/rally trials over the course of a cluster of no more than five (5) consecutive days at the same site or within a local geographical area as determined by the AKC is waived until December 31, 2021.
5. Two-Judge Requirement to Title – The regulation requiring dogs to be certified by two different judges to have received qualifying scores at three or more events to title is waived through December 31, 2021.
6. Obedience Novice Group Exercise – The distance between dogs is modified to 8 feet (currently 6 feet) through December 31, 2021.

Regulations that Have Been Amended

1. Judges/Training Sessions – The regulation that no exhibitor may show a dog under a judge at an obedience or rally trial if the exhibitor has participated in a training session taught by that judge within thirty (30) days prior to the date of the event has been amended to ten (10) days prior to the date of the event effective January 1, 2021.



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2. Trainers/Instructors – The regulation that no dog may be entered/shown under a judge at an obedience/rally trial if the dog is owned/handled by any person who has regularly served as a trainer/instructor of that judge; or if the dog has been regularly trained or instructed by the judge within thirty (30) days prior to the date of the trial has been amended to ten (10) days prior to the date of the event effective January 1, 2021.
3. Restrictions for Emergency Judge Changes– Eligibility restrictions for exhibitors and dogs have been removed when there is an emergency judge change effective January 1, 2021.
4. Closing Dates – The regulations for closing dates were amended to allow clubs, at their option, to have a closing date seven (7) days prior to the event effective January 1, 2021.
5. Obedience Figure Eight Exercise – Cones must be used in place of stewards in the Figure Eight exercise effective January 1, 2021.
6. Publishing Rally Course Maps – The regulations were amended to allow clubs to distribute the rally course maps by email and to post them electronically online no earlier than 6PM the evening before each trial effective January 1, 2021.

Participants are expected to follow state, local government, facility and event guidelines. Clubs should be prepared to enforce the guidelines that apply to their event.

These Suggested Best Practices may be periodically updated. Please check the AKC Rally (www.akc.org/sports/rally/) or the AKC Obedience (www.akc.org/sports/obedience/) websites for the most up-to-date version.

CDC - How to Protect Yourself and Others:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

For questions or additional suggestions, please contact the Club Companion Events Department at [Companion Events](#).

Stay Safe – Enjoy Your Dogs