

AFA Rule Clarification Statement –# 14 – Issued November 2009

The AFA Committee at its October and November 2009 Committee Meetings considered a number of Rules clarification requests and as a result decided to issue this Rule Clarification Statement to all Judges and Club coordinators.

1. Clarification of new Forfeit Rules dealing with teams not reporting for races.

Question – “If the changeover time between the races is less than 3 minutes, eg 90 seconds, do I as a Judge only have to wait the 90 seconds, or the full 3 minutes, before I can declare a non-reporting team has forfeited and start the race? If I have to wait the full 3 minutes, what's the point of having a changeover time less than 3 minutes?”

Clarification:

The Judge is required to wait the full 3 minutes before forfeiting the late team and starting the first heat without opponent.

When Chapter 7 was being revised considerable debate took place on how much time we should allow a late team – views ranged from the Changeover time 60 seconds / 90 seconds up to 5 minutes (which was the old rule). It was felt that applying a forfeit immediately after the changeover time was too harsh, but that allowing 5 minutes was not in the interests of keeping the race program moving. 3 minutes was seen as a reasonable compromise.

The difference between applying the Changeover time and the 3 minute Forfeit deadline was not seen as an issue likely to cause delays in racing because teams are normally more motivated to get into the ring as early as possible to get the most set-up and training time rather than to delay unnecessarily. The Committee is not aware of any behaviour in recent racing that changes this view.

Question – “If a team is late reporting for a race and the first heat is run without them competing and therefore they have forfeited the first heat, is 7(b)(i) saying that they can be declared as disqualified for the rest of the competition for Forfeiting without Just Cause?”

Clarification:

Being forfeit from the first heat for lateness does not automatically trigger a disqualification under 7 b) i).

Explanation: Chapter 7 Forfeits parts a) and b) are intended to be read in sequence, in that part a) covers the sequence of actions if a team is late in arriving for a race and part b) covers what happens if the team does not turn up to the race at all, i.e. enough heats are run under part a) without opponent until the unopposed team has won the race. If and when this occurs, part b) i) requires the team to be disqualified if they cannot demonstrate Just Cause.

The Committee accepted that the Rule wording could be misinterpreted and AGREED that a minor amendment in wording be adopted to remove the ambiguity. The amendment has

been incorporated into the Rules reprint as a minor change approved by Committee. The change in wording is restricted to the heading in 7 b) as shown below:

Deleted : Teams that forfeit without Just Cause.

Inserted : Teams that forfeit all heats in a Race without Just Cause

2. Clarification of Carding for 'chasing'.

Question – Is a Judge required to issue a Black Card in circumstances where a dog crosses and chases or closely follows other teams dog down the Jump line.

Clarification:

Under the AFA Dog Behaviour Policy Statement (AFA Policy Number 2) the introduction to the section dealing with aggression states " Dog aggression is any behaviour meant to intimidate or harm a person or another animal".

The statement designed to further guide Judges and Officials in deciding whether aggression is involved in any incident contains the words" with intent". The statement indicates " The words "with intent" are designed to signify that the Judge or Official must be of the opinion that the dog is showing behaviour that is designed to intimidate or actually harm another animal or person.

A dog simply crossing and then following another dog down the line of Jumps (even in close proximity) is not necessarily an aggressive act - if the Judge does not feel that the chasing dog has " intent" then the correct decision is simply to card the dog for crossing (or interfering) and not to issue a Black Card for aggression. In other words Judges do currently have a discretion to decide if aggression is evident or suspected and are not required to automatically issue a Black Card where 'following or chasing' is involved. As is normally the case the Judges decision is final. If a Black Card is issued the incident will be subject to full consideration and review by the Dog Incident Sub Committee and then the Committee.

3. Clarification of Rule regarding rerunning a heat after a false start.

Question - Where a heat has to be restarted because of a false start what is the Rule regarding changing the team composition or changing the running order.

Clarification:

The Committee noted that the wording of the AFA Rules (Section 5) indicates the Team CANNOT substitute a dog, as the heat has not ended. There is no reference in the current Rules however that prevent a change in the teams running order, including changing the start dog. The Committee confirmed that the wording of NAFA Rules are the same as the AFA Rules in this regard and that NAFA has always allowed teams to change running orders in a rerun but not substitute a dog. The Committee was advised that AFA Judges have generally interpreted the Rule to require the same running order to be maintained in the rerun. Given this is not stated anywhere in the Rules the Committee determined that a clarification should be issued indicating teams are free to alter running order where a false start has occurred but cannot substitute a dog.