

## **AFA Rules Clarification Statement No 16 – Issued January 2010**

The AFA Committee at its January 2010 Meeting dealt with two issues regarding interpretation of the Rules.

**Issue 1.** *Question raised by judge – is there a requirement in the Rules to have the ball bucket placed behind the barrier backing boards. If not is it acceptable to have ball buckets placed behind the boxloader.*

**Clarification** – There is no reference in the AFA Rules as to where the ball bucket must be located. The Committee noted that the normal location is behind the box loader so that extra balls can be obtained quickly if necessary. Care does need to be taken to avoid balls being in sight of dogs racing in either lane, including avoiding having buckets over filled with balls as this could constitute a distraction. There is no requirement in the Rules that ball bucket be located behind the barrier backing boards. The Committee concluded that it should issue the following clarification “ The Ball Bucket should be placed behind the box loader in such a way to ensure balls are not visible to dogs in either race lane. “

**Issue 2.** *Question raised by Judge – Is a “Pre Event Practice session” Training in the Ring and hence against the AFA Rules.*

**Clarification** – This question arose as a result of the special condition proposal by the organisers of the Mutts on Mats Twilight Competition to set aside a 4 hour pre event practise session to allow teams that wished to experience running indoors on matting for the first time to do so in a non competitive environment. It was noted however that it could have equally been raised in a situation where a Competition organiser scheduled singles or pairs racing before the start of a competition.

The Committee noted that the AFA Rules (Chapter 8) referred to not allowing practice in the Ring during the DURATION OF THE COMPETITION. A critical issue therefore was to define what was “ the duration of the competition”. There is no such definition in the AFA Rules. The Committee noted that there was a definition of when a competition started and finished in the NAFA Rules (Glossary of Terms). The NASA Rules refer to the “Racing Day” in place of “the duration of the competition” and state “ The Racing day begins 30 minutes before the first scheduled race and ends after the conclusion of the last race and the EJS has been removed, unless the Executive Director has granted permission for use of the EJS outside of racing. The NAFA Definition of Training in the Ring also confirm that “Training in the ring occurs once racing has started and before the end of the racing day where the handler uses techniques or devices that would be used to train”.

The Committee noted that under the NAFA Rules, as worded, the proposal to schedule a pre event training time that ended at least an hour before the scheduled start of racing would not break the training in the ring definition.

The Committee also noted the advice from the Competition organisers that the practice session at Mutts on Mats would not involve use of the EJS and would not be conducted in a race format. It was designed as a training session and advertised as such.

The Committee concluded that it should accept the NAFA definition to determine its interpretation of “the duration of a competition”. The duration of a Competition is thus

interpreted to be the period beginning 30 minutes before the scheduled start time of the first race and ending after the running of the last race, including any run offs.

Competition organisers who wish to conduct Training opportunities in line with this interpretation either before or after a competition must note the proposal as a requested special condition on their Sanction Application Forms and obtain AFA approval for the training activity.