



AUSTRALIAN
FLYBALL
ASSOCIATION

AFA Policy on Dog Behaviour

1st January 2022

Contents

DOG BEHAVIOUR POLICY..... 2

DOG BEHAVIOUR POLICY

This policy details the process for reporting and dealing with dog behaviour including interference, distraction, suspected aggression and dog aggression. Incidents of dog aggression are distinct from Member misconduct incidents, which are dealt with under Clause 14 of the Constitution.

This policy recognises the AFA's duty of care to all Members and their dogs. Members should note that it is their responsibility to ensure that their dogs are under control at all times and are adequately trained in correct behaviours necessary for flyball racing.

Interference:

Interference is when a dog from one team interferes so that it causes a dog in the other team to deviate in its run or not able to finish its run. The Judge will stop the race and the race will be awarded to the team which did not interfere. The Judges Report Form and meeting Timesheet will cite "Interference" as the type of incident.

Distraction:

Team members shall not distract the opposing team by bouncing balls, using a flyball box at the end of the run, or by any other means nor by throwing any object for their dogs (i.e. balls, toys, Frisbees, dummies, gloves or treats).

Team members are required to pick up loose balls.

The first offence of any of these infractions shall receive a warning. A second offence or any offence thereafter will result in the loss of the heat.

Aggression:

Dog aggression is any behaviour meant to intimidate or harm a person or another animal.

If a dog shows aggression towards another dog, animal, handler, official or Judge at any time during a AFA sanctioned event, either in the ring or outside the ring, an AFA Accredited Judge (inside the ring) or the AFA Representative (outside the ring) may excuse the dog from the Event. If the incident occurred in the Ring and was observed by the Judge a Black signal card will be displayed.

The involved official (i.e. the Judge or the AFA Representative) has the sole right to determine the degree of aggression and whether or not a dog should be excused. Any action to excuse a dog for aggression must be reported to the AFA by the involved official within 48 hours. Dogs excused for aggression may not compete in any further AFA sanctioned activities until the AFA Committee investigates the incident and informs the Member of the results of that investigation.

Aggressive behaviour may vary in severity. As a guide the following behaviours are potential demonstrations of aggression:

- Dog lunging, snapping or nipping at another dog or person with intent.
- Dog engaging in heavy growling and/ or intimidating another dog by eyeballing with intent.
- Dog chasing and frightening another dog with intent.
- Dog chasing and biting another dog or person with or without a resultant sign of injury;
- Dog attacking another dog or person.

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.

Any immediate appeal against the decision of a Judge at a race meeting must be submitted before the start of the next heat. After that time appeals can only be lodged with the AFA by written submission. Appeals against decisions of the AFA Representative can only be in writing to the AFA.

Upon receipt of an aggressive dog incident report the AFA Committee will appoint a Sub-Committee of 3 to investigate the incident. The Sub-Committee will:

- Comprise those members of the AFA Committee best qualified to assess dog aggression.
- Take into account all available evidence including the involved official’s report and any Witness Declarations, and will invite the Member or handler to make a Declaration.
- Take into account the length of time the dog has been competing in Flyball and any prior Incident Reports involving the dog.

Within 21 days of its establishment the Sub-Committee will report its findings and any recommended action to the AFA Committee. Recommended actions can include:

- (a) Placing the dog on warning (i.e. indicating that any further incidents involving the dog may result in a period of suspension and the requirement for retraining);
- (b) Suspending the dog with a requirement for retraining. Suspension periods may vary from a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 12 months. During the suspension period the Member should obtain independent advice about the behaviour retraining necessary to overcome the behaviour problem;
- (c) Permanent exclusion of the dog from any sanctioned AFA activity.

Upon receipt of the Sub-Committee’s report the AFA Committee will at its next meeting make a determination and subsequently notify the Member.

(The Protocol (process) for dealing with Dog Incident Reports can be found on the AFA Web site under the heading Member Information- General.)

The Member may lodge an appeal within 14 days of the date of service of the AFA Committee’s decision. Any appeal should focus on new evidence or facts not taken into account by the AFA. Any appeal will be considered by the AFA Committee at its next scheduled meeting and the Member will be notified of the outcome within 7 days of that meeting. (The Protocol (process) for dealing with Appeals can be found on the AFA Web under the heading Member Information - General.)

Note: At any time, the Supervisory Judge may report to the AFA Committee any dog whose behaviour results in regular carding reports that may be evidence of the need for retraining. The AFA Committee will deal with any such report in the same way as an aggressive dog investigation i.e. a Sub-Committee will be formed to investigate and report.

Process for applying for re-instatement of suspended dogs

At the end of any suspension period the Member may apply to the AFA Committee for reinstatement by showing evidence that the dog has undergone satisfactory retraining. Applications for reinstatement must include copies of the weekly re-training log (see “Weekly Training Log” under the “Members” / “Forms” page on the AFA website). The weekly retraining log will be signed by the Club Co-ordinator or Manager and will show:

- The amount of time dedicated to re-training.
- The specific behaviours identified and addressed.

- The behavioural achievements.
- The names, qualifications and experience of those assisting with re-training.
- The names of witnesses to the retraining.

Applications for reinstatement must also include:

- A statement from the Club Co-ordinator or Manager detailing the assessed outcomes of the retraining program and providing an opinion about whether the dog is suitable for reinstatement; and
- Witness Declarations from people who have witnessed the retraining activity.

Members are urged to seek the best quality retraining advice they can.

The AFA Committee will consider any reinstatement application received at its next scheduled Meeting and will determine the extent to which the submission indicates successful retraining. The AFA Committee will, where satisfied with the retraining, so notify the Member and lift the suspension from the date of notification.

If the AFA Committee is not fully satisfied it may require an independent assessment of the dog's suitability for reinstatement. The AFA Committee will then appoint a suitably experienced panel of 3 AFA Members who do not belong to the offending dog's Club. The Member will be consulted about a suitable time and venue for the assessment.

Extended Suspension

If the AFA Committee is not satisfied that the retraining has produced the required behavioural change in the dog it may extend the suspension period by a maximum of a further 6 months, during which time the dog must undergo retraining by a practitioner with qualifications in animal behaviour.

Second Offences

Any dog found guilty of a second aggression incident will be automatically suspended for a minimum of 6 months during which time during which time the dog must undergo retraining by a practitioner with qualifications in animal behaviour.