

Rainier Agility Team Canine Conduct Guidelines

In the interest of preventing undesirable occurrences of dog interactions at agility events, Rainier Agility Team has prepared these Canine Conduct Guidelines to help guide responsible interactions and to educate and prepare handlers. Our goal is to have no reportable incidents at any of our trials, fun runs or other club-sponsored events.

As always, we strongly suggest working with a qualified and reputable trainer if you need guidance on working with and handling a highly-aroused dog or a dog with fear-aggression issues.

It is the goal of Rainier Agility Team to provide an environment that is as safe as possible for the participants at all functions of the club. The club will actively work to educate the membership about appropriate conduct and the prevention of dog aggression. The Trial Chair or Event Coordinator will have the authority (in their sole discretion) to excuse and remove any dog determined to be dangerous.* Additional action, such as a ban from club events, may be decided as well by the RAT Board of Directors.

It is the responsibility of every competitor to read and understand the rules that govern each of the sanctioning agility organizations in regard to inappropriate dog behavior, including behavior that could warrant the expulsion of the dog from a trial or the sanctioning organization.

These behavior guidelines and management tips adopted by Rainier Agility Team were developed by The Bay Team to promote good canine conduct at events. RAT adopts them from The Bay Team with the intention of increasing awareness and understanding regarding appropriate dog behavior as well as to provide useful and practical information regarding better management of our dogs during all club events. Even if you have a polite dog, following these guidelines may help to keep your friendly dog safe on trial grounds and at events. We hope that you will join us in helping to prevent dog aggression incidents and keeping our dogs safe and relaxed by making use of these tips.

Inappropriate or questionable behaviors include:

*Dogs that snap and retreat without any intent to fight

*Dogs that snap, do not retreat, and intend to fight

*Dogs that lunge, growl or snarl at other dogs, whether their intent can be determined or not (including on and off leash and in x-pens or crates)

*Overzealous dogs that are sweet, but whose attentions or contact is not appreciated by other dogs

*Dogs that alarm bark

*Dogs with no recall that are allowed off leash on the trial grounds at any time(out of control)

Dogs that are capable of inappropriate behavior include:

*Dogs that are physically or emotionally uncomfortable (or all dogs at one time or another)

*Dogs that are defensive in regards to commodities including food, space and people

*Dogs that are reactive by nature/design (many of the herding breeds that do agility)

*Dogs that are in close proximity to any of the above dogs

*Dogs without space manners (they want to approach most or all other dogs)

If your dog is exhibiting any of these behaviors you should:

*Begin taking management steps to avoid any scenarios that cause the behavior

*Begin training step to eliminate or decrease the behavior

*Talk with your instructor about your dog's behavior and ask for help in improving your dogs' behavior

*Educate yourself so that you understand where these current behaviors could be heading

MANAGEMENT TIPS ... for Dogs with Questionable or Undesirable Behaviors

Managing behavior means taking preventative measures that protect your dog from opportunities to practice unwanted behaviors. It should not be confused with training.

Training would imply that the dog has been systematically taught a new behavior to replace an unwanted one. Management can be a critical tool during the training process.

Success in eliminating unwanted behaviors is determined by who the dog is as well as the ability of the trainer.

The following tips are designed to help you manage your dog at our events. They are intended to be an immediate and possibly temporary approach to immediate situations and should not be considered as anything different. You may need to explore long-term training solutions with a professional.

Confinement

Being smart about your dogs' confinement is critical to your dogs' comfort as well as helping prevent inappropriate behaviors!

*The type of crate you choose and where you set it can be key to managing many behaviors.

*Understand that even dogs that love each other may prefer not to be confined with each other on certain occasions.

*Confinement and privacy go hand in hand. Most items used for confinement can be made private with some kind of a cover. A simple bed sheet will often do the trick.

*Choose a crating place that has the lowest traffic instead of the most convenience

Choosing the best way to confine your dog:

*X-pens: are not very stable and while roomy offer no privacy and stimulation is often the enemy

*Soft Crates: While easy to manage do not provide adequate security for some dogs (any dog that has the need can chew through them)

*Plastic Crates: Might be the answer for you! Owning "wheels" to move them around can solve the problem of them being awkward to handle.

*Wire Crates: More stable than x-pens and soft crates and easier to carry than a plastic crate but they offer no privacy unless covered.

*Tying the dog: it is not appropriate to tie your dog at any time. Plus, many agility organizations ban tying dogs out. It leaves your dog vulnerable to others, which can promote defensiveness.

*Down stay or "wait there" is the same as tying. Don't do it. Volunteers that want their dogs near them when they work should use some type of crate.

Ringside: Just Before and After You Compete in the Ring

*Your attention should be on your dog

*Until you are in the ring, your leash should be on your dog at all times.

*Do not line up at the immediate gate entrance when there are more than 5 dogs ahead of you

*If your warm up or cool down includes some unusual highly escalated activity to motivate your dog, don't do it ring side (this would not include the normal or average encouragement used with food and toys)

*Control your dog at the end of the run by getting them back on a leash ASAP.

Moving About the Trial or Event Grounds

*Your attention should be on your dog

*You may choose to use equipment designed to give you more control than a leash and collar, such as: head collars, soft fabric muzzles, harnesses and sensation harnesses, BUT, be sure to know the rules of the organization if you are at a competition. Some agility organizations ban the use of certain equipment.

*Don't pass "dog to dog" when possible, put yourself between the approaching dog and your dog

*Walk; don't run when moving through dog/handler "traffic".

*Do not let your dog stare at other dogs, learn the difference between watching and staring

*If your dog is staring or being stared at, move away until it stops

*If your dog does become aroused do not stop moving; immediately turn and go the other direction if possible

*Do not try to train the dog once a reaction is in progress, just turn and go the other way. Manage the situation to avoid stressing other dogs in the area as well as diffusing the situation. A training opportunity may or may not be reasonable at that time.

Common Exercise Areas

*Keep your dog on leash until you have a chance to communicate with others that are already there

*Do not let your dog race up to the other dogs without being invited to do so

*If you have a dog with questionable behavior, put that dog on leash ASAP. Consider if that dog should be off leash at all.

*It is not appropriate to play fetch or frisbee in the common areas unless you are alone or far away

*If your dog looks intimidated or over stimulated he probably is, remove him. Talk to a professional about the best way to address that issue

The Nuts and Bolts

Do you run into any one of these situations at trials?

*My dog is easily over stimulated

*My dog needs a lot of space

*I always have to worry about protecting my dog from other dogs

Then we encourage and support you to take these actions:

*Crate in a quiet well-removed covered area or crate from your vehicle if possible

*Tell the Gate Steward or put a <symbol> by your dog's name on the gate sheets if you are ready to run but need to wait away from the gate to keep your dog's brain intact.

*Alert friends and fellow competitors with the key pass phrase **"my dog needs space, thanks!"**

And we suggest the following resources at our events for anyone interested:

*Talk to the trial chair who will always be happy to chat with anyone that is worried about their dog or other dogs having issues.

*Your friends are there for you: let them help notice issues before they bloom, buffer you from other dogs, run interference for you at the gate or at the ring exit.

Asking for help is a success story, not an admission of failure

**Dangerous dog behavior will include, but is not limited to, dog bites to humans or dog bites to dogs committed with intention to harm.*