



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL

## **Rules for the Conduct of**

# **Dances with Dogs Competitions (Encompassing Dances with Dogs Freestyle & Heelwork to Music)**

**(Effective from 1st January, 2011)**

**Adopted by the Member Bodies of the  
Australian National Kennel Council 2008**

**Amended  
October 2010  
February 2011**

**Adopted by the Member Bodies of the  
Australian National Kennel Council**

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**RULES FOR THE CONDUCT OF DANCES WITH DOGS COMPETITIONS  
(ENCOMPASSING DANCES WITH DOGS FREESTYLE  
AND HEELWORK TO MUSIC)**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Dances with Dogs competitions provide handlers and their dogs with an opportunity to demonstrate a skilful, choreographed routine, performed to music.
- 1.2 Dances With Dogs encompasses two separate divisions: (a) Dances With Dogs Freestyle and (b) Heelwork to Music.
- 1.3 Dances with Dogs has its foundation in traditional obedience heelwork. However, in the discipline of Dances with Dogs, the inclusion of innovative and creative moves, and movement in time to and interpretation of the music are encouraged.
- 1.4 The discipline requires a good rapport between dog and handler, reflected in a high level of teamwork.
- 1.5 Dances with Dogs performances should have spectator appeal and competitions should be conducted in such a way as to allow and encourage the audience to respond, where appropriate, throughout the performance.
- 1.6 In the event that interpretation of these Rules is required, clarification should be sought, in writing, through the relevant Canine Control, from the Dances with Dogs Committee of the ANKC, the decision of which will be binding.
- 1.7 Any person making an entry in a Dances with Dogs competition does so at their own risk and no Canine Control or Affiliate shall be responsible for any injury or damage to any person, dog or property.
- 1.8 The National Dances with Dogs Committee shall review and may recommend to the ANKC change(s) to these Rules two years from their date of implementation. Thereafter, the rules shall be reviewed early in 2014 and at subsequent five-yearly intervals.

**2.0 DEFINITIONS**

Where referred to in these Rules, the following words will have the meanings assigned to them below:

“Affiliate”: a member body of a Canine Control conducting a Dances with Dogs competition.

“Canine Control”; the Controlling Body in each State or Territory of Australia.

“Dances With Dogs Freestyle”: a division of Dances with Dogs, in which the dog works off lead and in which the routine may, subject to the provisions of these Rules, encompass a variety of moves, including heelwork and non-heelwork moves to present an interpretation of their music; there is no prescription as to the nature of moves or the level of heelwork required in Dances With Dogs Freestyle routines.

“Dances with Dogs”: an ANKC approved canine sport which encompasses both (a) Dances With Dogs Freestyle and (b) Heelwork to Music divisions.

“Heelwork to Music”: a division of Dances With Dogs in which the dog works off lead in any of the following heel positions, moving at any pace and in any direction:

- |                                        |                     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Dog on Right Hand Side of handler: | 1- facing forwards  |
|                                        | 2- facing backwards |
| (b) Dog on Left Hand Side of handler   | 3- facing forwards  |
|                                        | 4- facing backwards |
| (c) Dog across front of handler :      | 5- facing left      |
|                                        | 6- facing right     |
| (d) Dog across back of handler :       | 7- facing left      |
|                                        | 8- facing right     |

The dog must –

- (a) move parallel to the handler in one of the nominated heelwork positions;
- (b) keep the same distance in relation to the handler in all positions;
- (c) move in the same direction as the handler;
- (d) move at the same pace as the handler.

A minimum of 60% of a Heelwork to Music routine should consist of heelwork, during which the dog's shoulder should be reasonably close to the handler's leg; the percentage of heelwork in a routine is calculated on the basis of the time spent undertaking heelwork positions, not the number of moves included. A maximum of 40% of the routine may consist of moves such as spins , hind leg walking, crawling, weaves etc where the dog's shoulder is not close to the handler's leg.

### **3.0 DANCES WITH DOGS COMPETITIONS**

The scheduling of any Dances with Dogs competition shall be subject to the approval of the relevant Canine Control. An Affiliate conducting a Dances with Dogs competition shall offer all of the titling classes listed in section 3.1 below.

#### **3.1 Titling Classes**

The following titling classes are available in the Dances With Dogs Freestyle and Heelwork to Music divisions of Dances with Dogs competitions.

##### **3.1.1 Dances With Dogs Freestyle**

- (a) **DANCES WITH DOGS FREESTYLE STARTER:** For dogs that are not eligible for the Starter title.
- (b) **DANCES WITH DOGS FREESTYLE NOVICE:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'DWD Freestyle Starter' (DWDF.S.).
- (c) **DANCES WITH DOGS FREESTYLE INTERMEDIATE:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'DWD Freestyle Novice' ( DWDF.N.).
- (d) **DANCES WITH DOGS FREESTYLE ADVANCED:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'DWD Freestyle Intermediate' (DWDF.I.).

##### **3.1.2 Heelwork to Music**

- (a) **HEELWORK TO MUSIC STARTER:** For dogs that are not eligible for the Starter title.
- (b) **HEELWORK TO MUSIC NOVICE:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'Heelwork to Music Starter' (HTM.S.).
- (c) **HEELWORK TO MUSIC INTERMEDIATE:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'Heelwork to Music Novice' (HTM.N.)

- (d) **HEELWORK TO MUSIC ADVANCED:** For dogs that have qualified for the title of 'Heelwork to Music Intermediate' (HTM.I.).

### **3.1.3 Progression through titling classes**

- 3.1.3.1 A dog may not be entered for any class in either division without previously having qualified for the title at the level of the previous class.
- 3.1.3.2 A dog which has gained sufficient Qualifying Certificates to be eligible for the title of DWDF.S., HTM.S., DWDF.N., HTM.N., DWDF.I. or HTM.I. shall not be eligible to compete in any further class at that level except in a competition for which entries closed before the final qualification score required for that title was gained.
- 3.1.3.3 At the discretion of the competition Secretary, a competitor who completes the necessary qualifying certificates for a title and has applied for that title after the closing of entries may request and be transferred to the next higher class in the relevant division.

## **3.2 Non-titling Classes**

An Affiliate conducting a Dances with Dogs competition may, at its discretion, offer non-titling classes, such as the following:

- Brace: One handler with two dogs  
Groups: More than two handlers, each with one dog  
Junior: Handlers between the age of 10 and 18 years  
Pairs: Two handlers, each with one dog.

## **4.0 TITLES**

### **4.1 Qualifying Certificates**

To be awarded a Qualifying Certificate, a competitor must gain the following from at least two of the three judges –

- (a) a score of at least ten (10) points in each of the three (3) judging categories; and  
(b) a total score of at least forty-five (45) points.

### **4.2 Dances with Dogs titles**

- 4.2.1 All dogs eligible to be entered in a Dances with Dogs competition in accordance with these Rules shall be eligible to receive Title Certificates upon meeting the requirements set out in Rule 4.2.2 below.
- 4.2.2 The Canine Control will receive applications for the use of the relevant title letters in connection with the name of each dog, when the dog has gained Qualifying Certificates in accordance with the following requirements:
- (a) 'DWDF.S'/ 'HTM.S' signifying Dances With Dogs Freestyle Starter/Heelwork to Music Starter in connection with, and after the name of, each dog, which shall be certified by Judges to have gained a total of two (2) Qualifying Certificates in the Starter class in the relevant division. Certificates must be gained under at least two (2) different Judging Panels.

- (b) 'DWDF.N'/ 'HTM.N' signifying Dances With Dogs Freestyle Novice/Heelwork to Music Novice in connection with, and after the name of, each dog, which shall be certified by Judges to have gained a total of three (3) Qualifying Certificates in the Novice class in the relevant division. Certificates must be gained under at least two (2) different Judging Panels.
- (c) 'DWDF.I'/ 'HTM.I' signifying Dances With Dogs Freestyle Intermediate/Heelwork to Music Intermediate in connection with, and after the name of, each dog, which shall be certified by Judges to have gained a total of three (3) Qualifying Certificates in the Intermediate class in the relevant division. Certificates must be gained under at least two (2) different Judging Panels.
- (d) 'DWDF.A'/ 'HTM.A' signifying Dances With Dogs Freestyle Advanced/Heelwork to Music Advanced in connection with, and after the name of, each dog, which shall be certified by Judges to have gained a total of three (3) Qualifying Certificates in the Advanced class in the relevant division. Certificates must be gained under at least two (2) different Judging Panels.
- (e) 'DWDF.Ch'/'HTM.Ch' signifying Dances With Dogs Freestyle Champion/ Heelwork to Music Champion in connection with, and before the name of, each dog which has gained its DWDF.A or HTM.A title respectively and thereafter gains a further seven (7) Qualifying Certificates in the Advanced class in the relevant division, with aggregate scores of 160 points or more, under at least three (3) different Judging Panels.

4.2.3 The following is a summary of the requirements for titles at each level. Only the highest Dances With Dogs title in each division awarded to the dog will be used in connection with the name of the dog.

| Class                            | Starter         | Novice          | Intermediate    | Advanced        | Champion                                                                     |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title                            | DWDF.S<br>HTM.S | DWDF.N<br>HTM.N | DWDF.I<br>HTM.I | DWDF.A<br>HTM.A | DWDF.Ch<br>HTM.Ch                                                            |
| Number of certificates           | 2               | 3               | 3               | 3               | 7 (subsequent to Advanced title) with aggregate scores of 160 points or more |
| Minimum number of Judging Panels | 2               | 2               | 2               | 2               | 3                                                                            |

**4.2.3 Application for title**

The owner/lessee(s) of any dog which has gained sufficient qualifying certificates for award of one of the titles listed above, must lodge an application for recognition of the title with the Canine Control in the state/territory in which the registered owner/lessee(s) reside(s) as soon as practicable after gaining the final required qualifying certificate. Applications for all titles must be submitted on the appropriate form, providing details of qualifying certificates and scores under the required number of Judging Panels and, in the case of qualifying certificates obtained interstate, must be accompanied by copies of the qualifying certificates awarded. Applications for all titles must be accompanied by the prescribed fee and, upon approval, a title certificate will be issued to the applicant authorising the use of the letters concerned.

### **4.3 Decisions**

- 4.3.1 Decisions of the Committee of the Affiliate conducting any Dances With Dogs competition shall be subject to appeal to the Canine Control in the State/Territory in which the competition is conducted in accordance with the rules of the relevant Canine Control.
- 4.3.2 The Rules of the Canine Control shall apply to any Dances With Dogs competition and to any Affiliate conducting competitions. In the event of any inconsistency, the Canine Control rules shall prevail.
- 4.3.3 Anyone taking part in a competition who openly impugns the actions or decisions of the Judging Panel shall render themselves liable to be debarred from further participation in the competition and may be ordered from the grounds and further dealt with in accordance with the rules of the relevant Canine Control.

### **5.0 RINGS**

- 5.1 Except with the approval of the relevant Canine Control, the ring shall be a minimum of 12m by 15m. Dimensions of the ring must be stated in the Schedule.
- 5.2 Where competitions are held indoors, the floor must have or be covered with a non-slip surface.
- 5.3 Ropes or markers indicating the ring perimeter must be highly visible to competitors and the Judging Panel and not obscure the Judging Panel's vision of competitors.
- 5.4 All ring equipment necessary for the proper conduct of a competition shall be provided by the Affiliate conducting the competition.
- 5.5 A distance of at least one metre from the ring perimeter is to be cordoned-off. Spectators must remain outside the cordoned area.
- 5.6 The allocated judging area must be cordoned off from all spectators.
- 5.7 The ring entrance and competitor assembly area must be kept free from spectators throughout the duration of the competition.
- 5.8 Dogs, other than exhibits, must not be within four (4) metres of the competition ring perimeter.
- 5.9 No food, toy or motivator may be taken into the assembly area, unless the assembly area is at least twelve (12) metres away from the competition ring.
- 5.10 No items of any kind shall be thrown by any person into the ring throughout the duration of the competition.

### **6.0 EXHIBIT REQUIREMENTS**

#### **6.1 Eligibility of exhibits**

- 6.1.1 Dances with Dogs competitions are open to dogs that are –
  - (a) registered with the relevant Canine Control;
  - (b) of either sex, whether desexed or entire; and
  - (c) 12 months of age or over, on the day of a sanctioned event which includes a Dances with Dogs competition. **(EAP 02/11)**



6.2.1 Dogs must have satisfied the requirements specified in section 3.1.3 *Progression through titling classes*, and be entered in the appropriate division and class level.

## **6.2 Entries**

6.2.1 All entries must be made on the prescribed entry form and in accordance with the Canine Control Rules and the timelines published in the Schedule. The entry form must include the title of music to be used.

6.2.2 A separate entry form must be submitted for each entry.

6.2.3 For Heelwork to Music classes, the percentage of the routine comprised of heelwork (which must be no less than 60%) must be stated on entry form.

6.2.4 A handler and dog may be entered in both Dances With Dogs Freestyle and Heelwork to Music divisions, but may be entered in only one class within a division. A handler and dog may enter both titling and non-titling classes when the latter are offered by the Affiliate conducting the competition.

## **6.3 Music and costume**

6.3.1 Music in the public domain is acceptable and encouraged, provided it is not offensive or sexually suggestive in language. Competitors may obtain their music by creating it new, purchasing it, or receiving it free. Competitors do not need to hold music licenses for routines entered in Canine Control events<sup>1</sup>.

6.3.2 Costume, music and/or routine must not be offensive or sexually suggestive in language or presentation. Violations of this will result in the routine being disqualified.

6.3.3 All handlers are responsible for providing the Secretary with one (1) copy of their music, labelled with competitor's name, division, class, music selection and duration at least thirty minutes (or at such other time as specified in the Schedule) before commencement of the competition. Preferably music should be on CD. Where music is provided on a cassette tape, the relevant track must be pre-set by the competitor.

6.3.4 Music checks will be available at least thirty minutes (or at such other time as specified in the Schedule) before commencement of the competition. Handlers are responsible for the quality of recorded material, especially tape music.

6.3.5 Handlers are responsible for the collection of their music at the end of the competition.

## **6.4 Registration and attendance**

6.4.1 Each handler is responsible for registering their presence with the Secretary or ring steward prior to the commencement of the competition, as specified in the Schedule.

6.4.2 Competitors may be allowed to walk through their routine (without their dog) at least 30 minutes prior to commencement of competition.

6.4.3 No dog or handler shall be permitted to enter the competition ring after the Judging Panel has confirmed the suitability of the ring, except for the purpose of competition in their class.

6.4.4 The handler and dog shall be in the assembly area whilst the competitor prior to them is in the ring.

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<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for obtaining music licences will rest with the relevant State/Territory Canine Control (or Affiliate conducting the competition)

## **6.5 Welfare of Dogs**

- 6.5.1 A competitor whose dog is entered at a Canine Control sanctioned event shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the needs of their dog are met, and shall not put their dog's health or welfare at risk by any action, default, omission or otherwise.
- 6.5.2 Exhibits will be required to be inspected and vetted.

## **6.6 Bitches in Oestrus**

Bitches in oestrus or showing a coloured discharge of any sort shall not be permitted to compete in any competition or to remain within the precincts of the competition venue.

## **6.7 Fouling**

A dog which fouls at any time during a routine shall be disqualified and removed from the ring and take no further part in that class.

## **7.0 REMOVAL OF A DOG**

- 7.1 The Judging Panel must order the removal and disqualification from all competition on the day of any dog that attacks or displays aggressive behaviour towards any person or another dog, and shall lodge a report with the Canine Control.
- 7.2 The Judging Panel may order the removal from competition of any dog which is deemed disorderly or unmanageable, any handler who interferes wilfully with another competitor or a competitor's dog or whose behaviour is objectionable, and shall exclude or order the removal from competition any dog which the Judging Panel considers unfit to compete.
- 7.3 The following will be grounds for disqualification of the dog and handler and their immediate removal from the ring:
- (a) a dog fouling/eliminating in the ring;
  - (b) the dog and/or handler leaving the ring at any time during their routine; if a dog or handler accidentally steps outside the ring during a routine they will not be penalised;
  - (c) harsh or punitive treatment of the dog in the competition ring or within the precincts of the competition venue;
  - (d) excessive physical manipulation of the dog in the competition ring;
  - (e) any violation of the rules relating to dog attire or adornment;
  - (f) costume, music, or routine offensive or sexually suggestive in language or presentation;
  - (g) using a real or simulated/toy firearm or other weapon of any kind, or recorded or simulated noise of a gunshot(s);
  - (h) use of, or having on the person of the handler, during a performance, any food, toy or motivator of any kind;
  - (i) use of any human or animal props;
  - (j) continuous barking;
  - (k) a routine which significantly contravenes the time specified in rule 9.1.4.

## **8.0 WITHDRAWAL OF A DOG**

A competitor may withdraw a dog before or during judging but, following such withdrawal, that handler/dog team will not be able to take any further part in that class of the competition, unless the Judging Panel, in exceptional circumstances, otherwise approves.

## **9.0 THE ROUTINE**

- 9.1.1 A Dances with Dogs routine provides handlers and their dogs with an opportunity to demonstrate a skilful, choreographed routine performed to music.
- 9.1.2 The standard of the work presented by the handler and dog team must be higher and, will be judged accordingly, as they progress through the classes.
- 9.1.3 The routine must start, continue, and finish within the confines of the ring.
- 9.1.4 The duration of a routine shall be a minimum of one(1) minute and a maximum of four (4) minutes. It is anticipated that the duration of a routine in the lower class levels will be towards the minimum end of the nominated time and towards the maximum end of the nominated time for the routine in the higher class

## **9.2 Dogs**

- 9.2.1 Dogs may only wear a decorative/co-ordinated neck collar or scarf and/or a buckle collar.
- 9.2.2 Dogs must not wear –
  - (a) any kind of prong, choke, or slip collars (made of chain or any other material); or
  - (b) anything other than mentioned in 9.2.1.

## **9.3 Props and other items**

If props are used, they must be an integral part of the routine and must be used by the handler and/or dog. Violation of this rule will result in a one (1) penalty point deduction per prop. No props may be included or removed from the ring once the routine has commenced. Each Judge shall deduct such point(s) in the appropriate 'Deductions' section on the score sheet.

## **10.0 COMPETING**

- 10.1 No person shall carry out punitive correction or harsh handling of any dog at any time within the precincts of the competition venue.
- 10.2 Verbal commands and/or encouragement may be provided by the handler to the dog and shall not be penalised at any level. Physical touch as encouragement or reward before or after completion of a routine shall not be penalised at any level.
- 10.3 After a dog has commenced competing in a class, no substitution of handler is permitted in that class.
- 10.4 For the duration of the competition, all dogs must be on a lead (or otherwise restrained [e.g. in a crate]) except when competing or practising prior to the competition. Dogs will enter and leave the competition ring on lead; the ring steward will take the lead from the handler after entry to the ring and return it to the handler on completion of the routine.
- 10.5 The competition Secretary will allocate handlers a competition number for each entry submitted. Handlers are not required to wear numbers during competition. Numbers and names of the handler and dog, together with other relevant information, will be listed in the competition catalogue and the name of the handler and dog will normally be announced as they enter the ring. Other on-site displays of names of competitors and their dogs are permissible.

## **11.0 JUDGES AND JUDGING PANELS**

### **11.1 Composition of Judging Panels**

11.1.1 Each class in a titling Dances with Dogs competition will be judged by a Judging Panel comprised of three Judges.

11.1.2 Persons participating in a Judging Panel at any titling Dances with Dogs competition must have been approved by the relevant State/Territory Canine Control for judging at the relevant level.

### **11.2 Judges' marking criteria**

Each judge will mark all three sections of the Judging criteria as follows:

11.2.1 Routine Content – 20 marks

- (a) The routine is varied with no excessive repetition of moves, befitting the class entered.
- (b) Degree of difficulty in respect of the type of moves.
- (c) Teamwork displays harmony, a strong relationship and enjoyment between dog and handler.

11.2.2 Technical Merit – 20 marks

- (a) Accuracy of the moves and the dog's speed in responding; a smooth flow from one move to the next by both handler and dog.
- (b) The quality of moves and the extent of mistakes and/or refusals.
- (c) The accuracy of heelwork (Heelwork to Music division only).
- (d) The dog works in a natural and willing manner.

11.2.3 Musical Interpretation – 20 marks

- (a) Interpretation of the music, reflecting rhythm and phrasing of the music in changes and moves.
- (b) Movements are complementary to the routine's concept.
- (c) Choreography is apparent and flowing. The routine includes balance, structure, and design and makes best use of available space.
- (d) Costume enhances interpretation of the routine.

### **11.3 Penalties**

11.3.1 The penalties referred to in this rule relate to a deduction from the total score awarded by each individual Judge.

11.3.2 Minor barking may incur a penalty of up to two (2) points. Excessive barking shall incur a penalty of four (4) points. Continuous barking shall result in disqualification.

11.3.3 Inclusion in the performance of a prop which is not integral to, and used by the handler and/or dog during the routine shall incur a penalty of 1 point per prop.

11.3.4 Physical management or manipulation of the dog during the routine shall incur a penalty up to disqualification, according to the level of management/manipulation undertaken.

### **11.4 Marks and placings**

11.4.1 The results for each class, including marks from each Judge, must be displayed on the day and be accessible to all competitors.

11.4.2 The aggregate score (the sum of all Judges' marking) will determine placings. Qualifying scores take precedence over non-qualifying scores for placings.

- 11.4.3 In the event of a tied score, a decision will be on the following criteria:
- (a) Highest total score for **Technical Merit**; if no clear winner use criterion (b).
  - (b) Highest total score for **Repetition of Moves**; if no clear winner use criterion (c).
  - (c) Highest total score for **Degree of Difficulty**; if no clear winner use criterion (d).
  - (d) Highest total score for **Accuracy of Moves**; if no clear winner use criterion (e).
  - (e) Highest total score for **Interpretation of Music**; if no clear winner use criterion (f).
  - (f) Highest total score for **Choreography**; if no clear winner use criterion (g).
  - (g) Highest total score for **Teamwork**; if no clear winner use criterion (h).
  - (h) Highest total score for **Costume**.