



**AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB™**

## **Conformation**

### **Suggested Best Practices for the Well-Being of Dog Sport Participants**

The AKC supports each club's informed decision to reschedule, postpone or cancel their respective events, as well as supporting clubs ready to hold events in locations that are open and permit gatherings. As events resume across the country, people need to feel safe while enjoying their dog activities. The AKC urges clubs to take appropriate precautions for the benefit of their participants. Events need to be held in a manner that emphasizes the safety of participants and event officials over efficiency.

The following is a list of suggested best practices that may be helpful when planning or attending an event. Event locations, facilities and dates will differ. With a situation that is continually evolving, it is up to the clubs to determine the guidelines that best fit their event. In order to inform participants, specific guidelines established by the club/cluster should be published in the premium, show catalog, club website and posted on signage/flyers at their event. Participants in an event are required to adhere to the safety guidelines a club publishes in their premium list for their event. Event Committees are empowered by the AKC to deal with misconduct occurring in connection with their events.

#### General Practices

1. Clubs, officials and participants are required to follow state, local and facility guidelines that apply to the area and site where the event is held.
2. Practice social distancing consistent with guidelines in effect at the time of the event. Avoid congregating to the extent possible.
3. Consider wearing face coverings when in close proximity to others. Clubs should provide face coverings if desired for officials, judges and volunteers. Unless stated otherwise by government guidelines or club requirements, the AKC considers a face shield to be an acceptable face covering.
4. Consider wearing disposable or washable gloves.
5. Wash hands as frequently as possible. Have disinfecting spray at bathroom facilities for people to spray door handles (or anything else they touch). Consider hiring bathroom attendants to maintain maximum cleanliness.
6. If you utilize portable toilets, please ask for a hand washing station(s) to be delivered as well.
7. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or other physical contact.
8. Avoid touching dogs that are not your responsibility.

9. Avoid common use pens/pencils – bring your own.
10. Disinfect surfaces in common use areas as often as possible (tables, chairs, doorknobs, etc.) Clubs and facilities may consider not providing chairs.
11. Meals - Avoid or stagger group lunches/dinners if possible. Hospitality areas should avoid community items such as salt and pepper shakers, condiments, creamers, etc. Participants should consider bringing their own lunch/drinks.
12. Vendors should follow retail COVID guidelines for the area.
13. Parking – Park with sufficient distance between vehicles if possible. If there is a parking fee, ask exhibitors to bring exact change.
14. Indoor show sites should work with facilities to have as many entrance/exits points open as possible. Hand sanitizer should be available at every entrance to the site and at multiple locations within the site.
15. Parking/unloading staff should wear face coverings and sanitize their hands following the assistance of each individual.

### Event Practices

1. Opening Date – In order to provide clubs flexibility during times of uncertainty, clubs may specify a date in the premium when entries will start to be accepted. The “opening date” should be selected to allow time for mailed entries. Entries may not be accepted (open) for at least 72 hours following the publishing of the premium list.
2. Site Set-up - The size and layout of a site will determine the opportunities available to clubs.
  - Separate the rings if possible, otherwise set-up buffers within rings along adjoining sides to provide exhibitor spacing.
  - If individual rings are not possible, avoid placing gates, stewards and judges’ tables next to those in neighboring rings.
  - Consider two gates per ring, one for dogs entering and one for dogs exiting.
  - Add six-foot markers on the surface of the ring to provide exhibitors reference points for social distancing.
  - Stewards should be responsible for finding the dog in the catalog if the exhibitor does not know the armband number and for handing out armbands. Stewards should not hand their catalog to exhibitors for review. Stewards should sanitize their hands frequently and consider wearing a face mask and gloves.
  - For outdoor shows consider marking off areas near the rings for exhibitors to set-up personal pop-up tents. This can also be done for areas near the buildings holding indoor events.
  - Create a ready ring area outside the show ring for exhibitors showing the breed being judged.
  - Clubs should consider not providing chairs. Private chairs should not be placed in higher traffic areas.

- Public exercise pens serve a valuable function at dog shows, however, consider not providing public scoops, consider poop bags. Signage should be available explain that it is the party using the ex-pens responsibility to clean up after their dog.
3. Scheduling – With the efforts to make shows safer, the event may take longer. Modified scheduling may assist with congestion and provide a better experience for exhibitors. If using a superintendent, work with them to create a schedule that assists with the situation.
    - Consider published judging segments shorter than one hour.
    - If possible, schedule groups to start following the completion of the respective breeds. This allows exhibitors the option to leave for the day.
    - As per AKC rules, Groups and Best in Show are optional for group and all-breed shows
    - Some shows may consider implementing entry limits.
  4. Exhibitors
    - Prepare to be self-sufficient: bring sanitizer, bring a generator for electricity, bring personal use face coverings
    - Know the armband numbers for your entries before going to the ring. Bring rubber bands or arm-band clips to secure armband.
    - Do not congregate at the ring or ring gate.
    - While showing your dog, maintain social distances with other exhibitors.
  5. Grooming
    - Recommend grooming beside the exhibitor's vehicle including the use of pop-up tents should weather conditions warrant.
    - Design the layout of grooming areas and spaces to comply with the social distancing guidelines in place at the time. Marking off individual grooming spaces is encouraged.
    - Prohibit the use of forced air dryers in indoor grooming areas.
  6. Judging is where the ability to socially distance becomes challenging. Taking care to protect the parties will require a concerted effort between the judge, steward and exhibitors.
    - Judges should consider wearing face coverings if otherwise not required.
    - All classes should be called in catalog order to provide order and efficiency.
    - Judges must practice ring awareness, be conscious of spacing, and take appropriate measures to avoid crowding of exhibitors.
    - Judges are to have the exhibitor display the oral exam and may personally examine the mouth ONLY if absolutely necessary. By the nature of the procedure, judges must conduct thumb exams.
    - Judges should sanitize hands after examining each entry. Re-examining of dogs should be minimized.

- Judges are encouraged to personally pull ribbons for placements. Coupled with frequent hand sanitizing, this will help mitigate contact exposure.
  - Equipment used to measure and/or weigh dogs must be sanitized before and after each use.
  - Clubs should consider providing boxed lunches for judges and volunteers.
7. Photographers should consider using a process where a photo of the judge is added to the photo of the dog.
- Consider taking photos of each judge in the morning as though they were standing for an award photo.
  - Take win photos without judges.
  - Digitally insert the judge with the wins to finalize the photo.
  - Consider not using trophy presenters.

### Temporary Changes to Help Clubs

1. Event Application Late Fees – Event application late fees are waived through the end of 2021. This provides clubs more flexibility in planning or rescheduling their events.
2. Clubs may publish in their premium list that the location of the rings, indoors or outdoors, will be determined on the day of the event. Refunds will not be granted based on the final location. This must be published in a prominent location.
3. Offering three opportunities for Championship points at the same site on the same day with at least one of the three competitions must be a specialty clubs show will be allowed.
4. Distance Restrictions for Conformation - Extend the distance conformation clubs may hold a show outside their territory from 125 miles to 200 miles. Clubs with extenuating circumstance may request an exception to hold their conformation show up to 300 miles outside of their territory.  
  
Extend the distance specialty clubs may join another specialty club of the same breed outside their territory from 200 miles to 300 miles.
5. For events cancelled in 2020 or 2021 due to COVID related issues, AKC will apply Event Application fees to the club's next event of the same type.
6. Assignment Conflicts for Conformation Judges – The 30 days/200-mile conflict distance policy for assignments has been suspended for shows held through July 2021.
7. The same day exhibiting restriction for judges assigned only NOHS Groups and/or NOHS BIS has been waived for shows held in 2021. This will provide clubs greater flexibility and more options in the panel assignments.
8. Juniors that have turned 18 on or after March 1 may compete until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday or December 31, 2021, whichever comes first.

Participants are expected to follow state, local government, facility and event guidelines. Clubs should be prepared to enforce the guidelines that apply to their event. The conformation field reps will assist as always in an advisory capacity.

These Suggested Best Practices may be periodically updated. Please check the AKC conformation website ([www.akc.org/sports/conformation/](http://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/)) for the most up-to-date version.

CDC - How to Protect Yourself and Others:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

For questions or additional suggestions, please contact the Club Development Department at [clubdevelopment@akc.org](mailto:clubdevelopment@akc.org).

**Stay Safe – Enjoy Your Dogs**