

RULES FOR THE CONDUCT OF DANCES WITH DOGS COMPETITION

(Encompassing Dances with Dogs Freestyle & Heelwork to Music) effective 1st January 2012.

1. 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Dances with Dogs (DWD) competitions provide handlers and dogs with an opportunity to demonstrate a skillful, choreographed routine, performed to music. Encompass 2 divisions:

- Dances with Dogs Freestyle (**DWDF**)
- Heelwork to Music (**HTM**)

1.2 DWD has its foundation in traditional obedience heelwork. However, the inclusion of innovative and creative moves and movement in time and interpretation of music are encouraged in this sport. The discipline requires a good rapport between dog and handler, reflected in a high level of teamwork.

1.3 DWD performance should have spectators appeal and competitions should be conducted in such a way to allow and encourage the audience to respond, where appropriate, throughout the performance.

1.4 Any person entering the DWD competition does so at their own risk and M.K.A. shall not be held responsible for any injury or damage to any person, dog or property.

1.5 The M.K.A. Committee shall review the rules from time to time.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Dances with Dogs (DWD): a canine sport which encompass both (a) Dances with Dogs Freestyle and (b) Heelwork to Music divisions.

2.2 Dances with Dogs Freestyle (DWDF): a division of DWD, in which the dog works on or off leash and routine may encompass a variety of moves, including heelwork and non-heel work moves to present an interpretation of music. There is no prescription as to the nature of moves or the level of heelwork required in the routine.

2.3 Heelwork to Music (HTM): a division of DWD, in which the dog works off leash primarily in the heel position, moving at any pace, in 1 of the following 8 positions:

- dog on right side of handler; facing forwards or backwards
- dog on left side of handler; facing forwards or backwards
- dog across front of handler; facing left or right
- dog across back of handler; facing left or right

Direction of movement during heelwork; dog shall move in the same direction of the handler as follows:

- forwards or backwards;
- sideways to the right or left;
- in a circle on the spot.

The dog must:

- move parallel to the handler in one of the nominated heelwork positions;
- keep the same distance in relation to the handler in all positions;
- move in the same pace and direction of handler.

2.4 A minimum of 60% of the 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 routine is calculated based on time spent undertaking heelwork positions, not the number of moves involved. 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.

1. **3.0 CLASSES & TITLES**

3.1 The following classes and titles are available in HTM division:

3.1.1 Heelwork To Music Starter (HTM.S): This is a non-titling class for teams that are new to the sport. To encourage participation at this level, motivators are permitted in the ring and routine may be conducted with dog on or off leash. If the dog is on leash, a loose leash shall be used at all times. **Competitors must attain a qualifying score before they can participate in the next class.** Routine shall be approximately 1 minute to 2 minutes in duration. To qualify to **HTM.S** participant must have a qualifying score.

HTM Starter class routines should include as a minimum:

- At least 1 change of pace or at least 2 heelwork positions (selected from list of positions as defined above);
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space);
- Attention and teamwork (evident approximately 65% of the time).

3.1.2 Heelwork To Music Novice (HTM.N): This is a titling class for teams who are familiar with the format and able to perform a routine with the dog working off leash. Routine shall be approximately 2 minutes to 3 minutes in duration.

To qualify for the **HTM.N** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

HTM Novice class routines should include as a minimum:

- At least 1 change of pace;
- At least 2 heelwork positions and movement in at least 2 directions (selected from list of positions as defined above);
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space), and
- Attention and strong teamwork between dog and handler (evident approximately 75% of the time).

3.1.3 Heelwork To Music Intermediate (HTM.I): This is a titling class for dogs that have qualified for the title of Heelwork to Music Novice (HTM.N). Routines should present a team that demonstrates a very strong performance of heelwork movements together with good musical interpretation which come together in a well balanced routine. Routine should be approximately 2 minutes to 3minutes 30seconds in duration.

To qualify for the **HTM.I** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

HTM Intermediate class routines should include as a minimum:

- Some demonstration of slow, normal & fast pace heeling;
- At least 2 and preferably 3 heelwork positions and movements in at least 2 and preferably more directions, selected from the positions/moves in the listed in the extended definition above;

- Very good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space);
- Focus, attention and strong teamwork between the dog & the handler (evident approximately 90% of the time).

3.1.4 Heelwork To Music Advanced (HTM.A): This is a titling class for dogs that have qualified for the title of Heelwork to Music Intermediate (HTM.I). Routines should present a team that demonstrates a very outstanding performance of heelwork movements together with excellent musical interpretation which come together in a very well balanced routine. Routine should be approximately 2 minutes 30 seconds to 4 minutes in duration.

To qualify for the **HTM.A** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

HTM Advanced class routines should include as a minimum:

- Demonstration of slow, normal & fast pace heeling;
- At least 4 heelwork positions and movements in at least 2 and preferably more directions, selected from the positions/moves in the listed in the extended definition above;
- Excellent use of the ring, (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space);
- Focus, attention and strong teamwork between the dog and handler (evident approximately 95% of the time).

3.1.5 Heelwork to Music Champion (HTM.Ch): To qualify for the title HTM.Ch, the requirement is 4 Advanced Certificate (subsequent to the Advance title) with a minimum score of 50 points from each judge.

3.2 The following classes are available in DWD Freestyle division:

3.2.1 Dances with Dogs Freestyle Starter (DWDF.S): This is a non-titling class for teams that are new to the sport. To encourage participation at this level, motivators are permitted in the ring and routine may be conducted with dog on or off lead. If dog is on

lead, a loose lead shall be used at all times. **Competitors must attain a qualifying score before they can participate in the next class** Routine shall be approximately 1 minute to 2 minutes in duration. To qualify to **DWDF.S** participant must have a qualifying score.

DWDF Starter class routines should include as a minimum:

- At least 1 change of pace or at least 2 moves or positions;
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space);
- Attention and teamwork (evident approximately 65% of the time)

3.2.2 Dances with Dogs Freestyle Novice (DWDF.N): This is a titling class for teams who are familiar with the format and able to perform a routine with the dog working off lead. Routine shall be approximately 2 minutes to 3 minutes in duration.

To qualify for the **DWDF.N** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

DWDF Novice class routines should include as a minimum:

- At least 1 change of pace, with a moderate proportion able to perform at normal pace;
- At least one pose and at least 2 positions and movement in at least 2 directions;
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space), and
- Attention and strong teamwork between dog and handler(evident approximately 75% of the time).

3.2.3 Dances with Dogs Freestyle Intermediate (DWDF.I): This is a titling class for teams that have qualified for the title DWDF.N. Routines should present a team with very strong performance of positions, actions & moves together with good musical interpretation which should come together in a well balanced routine. Routine shall be approximately 2 minutes to 3 minutes 30 seconds in duration.

To qualify for the **DWDF.I** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

DWDF Intermediate class routines should include as a minimum:

- Some demonstration of slow, normal & face pace movements;
- At least 2 pose and at least 3 positions and movements in at least 2 directions;
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space), and
- Focussed attention and strong teamwork between dog and handler(evident approximately 90% of the time).

3.2.4 Dances with Dogs Freestyle Advanced (DWDF.A): This is a titling class for teams that have qualified for the title DWDF.I. Routines should present a team with very strong performance of positions, actions & moves together with good musical interpretation which should come together in a well balanced routine. Routine shall be approximately 2 minutes 30 seconds to 4 minutes in duration.

To qualify for the **DWDF.A** title, the requirement is 3 Qualifying Certificates in the class.

DWDF Advanced class routines should include as a minimum:

- Demonstration of slow, normal & face pace movements, including multiple changes of paces;
- At least 3 pose and at least 3 positions and movements in at least 3 directions;
- Good use of the ring (approximately 50% - 75% of total ring space), and
- Focussed attention and strong teamwork between dog and handler (evident approximately 95% of the time).

3.2.5 Dances with Dogs Freestyle Champion (DWDF.Ch): To qualify for the title DWDF.Ch, the requirement is 4 Advanced Certificate

(subsequent to the Advance title) with a minimum score of 50 points from each judge.

3.3 Qualifying Certificates for HTM and DWD classes.

3.3.1 To be awarded a Qualifying Certificate, a team must gain:

- a. a score of at least 10 points in each of the 3 judging criteria (refer to paragraph 4); and
- b. a total of 45 points or more overall (out of maximum of 60 points).

3.3.2 The owner of dog which has gained sufficient Qualifying Certificates for award of title shall lodge an application for award of title with M.K.A. on a prescribed application form.

3.3.3. Dances with Dogs Titles

- a. HTM.N b. DWDF.N
- a. HTM.I b. DWDF.I
- a. HTM.A b. DWDF.A
- a. HTM.Ch b. DWDF.Ch

Class	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Champion
Title	DWDF.N HTM.N	DWDF.I HTM.I	DWDF.A HTM.A	DWDF.Ch HTM.Ch
Number of certificates	3	3	3	4 (subsequent to Advanced title) with minimum score of 50 points from each judge
Minimum number of Judging Panels	2	2	2	3

3.3.4 Progression through titling classes

- Contrary to the HTM / DWDF Starter Rule, a dog may compete maximum 3 times in the Starter class. Upon the 3rd qualification, it has to move up to the next level, i.e. the Novice level.

- However, if it qualified once in the Starter level (HTM / DWDF) and takes part in the next level competition i.e. Novice level, and has qualified in the higher level, it cannot take part in the Starter level again.
- Similarly if a dog has competed in the class level and qualified in the class, it cannot enter a class lower than the level or the previous level.
- A dog that has gained sufficient Qualifying Certificates to be eligible for the title of DWDF.N, HTM.N, DWDF.I, HTM.I, shall not be eligible to compete in any further class at that level.
- A dog that has obtained a DWD qualification in an MKA sanctioned DWD competition will be allowed to use the qualification so obtained for titling purpose.

4 4.0 JUDGING CRITERIA

4.1 Composition of Judging Panel

Each class in a DWD competition will be judged by a Judging Panel which may comprise of one to three Judges.

4.2 Judge's Marking Criteria

The Judge shall mark the 3 sections of judging criteria as follows:

- **Routine Content - 20 marks**
 - a. 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.
- **Technical Merit - 20 marks**
 - a. Accuracy of moves and dog's speed in responding; a smooth flow from one move to the next by both handler and dog.
For HTM division, the accuracy of heel work will be judged.
 - b. Quality of moves and the extent of mistakes/refusals.
 - c. Dog works in a natural and willing manner.
- **Musical Interpretation - 20 marks**

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

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4.3 Penalties

4.3.1 Penalties relate to a deduction from the total score awarded by the judge.

4.3.2 Minor barking may incur penalty of up to 2 points. Excessive barking shall incur penalty of 4 points. Continuous barking may result in disqualification.

4.3.3 Inclusion of a prop which is not integral to routine and not used by handler during routine shall incur a penalty of 1 point per prop.

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

4.4 Placing

4.4.1 The score from the 3 judging criteria (refer to paragraph 4) will be displayed on the day of the competition.

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

4.4.3 In the event of a tied score, a decision will be made based on the following:

- a. Highest score for Technical Merit, (if still tied, use criteria (b)).
- b. Highest score for Routine Content, (if still tied, use criteria (c)).
- c. Highest score for Musical Interpretation.

2. 5.0 RING

5.1 The ring size shall be a minimum of 10m by 12m.

- 5.2 Where competitions are held indoors, the floor must have or covered with a non-slip surface.
- 5.3 All ring equipment necessary for the proper conduct of a competition shall be provided by the organising committee.
- 5.4 A distance of one metre from the ring perimeter is to be cordoned-off. Spectators must remain outside the cordoned area.
- 5.5 The allotted judging area must be cordoned off from all spectators.
- 5.6 The ring entrance and the competitor assembly area must be kept free from spectators throughout th duration of the competition.
- 5.7 Dogs, other than exhibits, must not be within 4 metres of the competition ring.
- 5.8 No food, toy or motivator may be taken into the assembly area, unless the assembly is at least twelve (12) metres away from the competition ring.
- 5.9 No items of any kind shall be thrown by any person into the ring throughout the duration of the competition.

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6.0 EXHIBITS REQUIREMENT

6.1 Eligibility of Exhibits.

- DWD competitions are open to all dogs that are 12 months or over on date of competition.
- Bitches in heat shall not be permitted in competition or to remain within the competition venue.
- All entries must be made on the prescribed form. The entry form must include th title of music to be used. A separate entry form must be submitted for each entry.
- For Heelwork to Music classes, the percentage of the routine comprised of heelwork (which must be no less than 60%) must be stated on the entry form.
- M.K.A. will allocate handlers a competition number for each entry submitted. Handlers not required to wear numbers during competition.

6.2 Routine:

- Duration of a routine shall be a minimum of 1 minute and a maximum of 4 minutes. It is anticipated that the duration in the

lower class levels will be towards the minimum length of time, whereas the duration in the higher class levels will be towards the maximum length of time.

- For Heelwork to Music division, the percentage of routine comprised heelwork (which must be no less than 60%) must be stated on the entry form.
- Standard of routine presented by the team is expected to be higher, and will be judged accordingly, as the team progress through the higher class levels.
- If props are used in the ring, the prop must be an integral part of the routine and must be used by the handler. Violation of this rule will result in 1 penalty point deduction per prop.
- Verbal commands or encouragement may be provided by the handler to the dog and shall not be penalized at any level. Physical touch as encouragement or reward before and after the completion of a routine shall not be penalized at any level.
- The routine must start, continue, and finish within the confines of the ring.

6.3 Music And Costume:

- Music, song or costume used must not be offensive or sexually suggestive in language or presentation.
- Dog may only wear a decorative/ coordinated neck collar or scarf and/or a buckle collar. Dog must not wear any kind of prong, choke or slip collar.
- All handlers are responsible for providing the organizers with 1 copy of their music, labeled with handler's name and dog's names, division, class, music selection and duration of music. Music should be recorded on CD and presented to organizers upon registration on the day of competition.
- Handlers are responsible for the quality of the recorded material on CD. Handlers are responsible for the collection of their music at the end of the competition.
- Music checks will be made at least thirty minutes before the commencement of the competition. Handlers will be responsible for their music check.

6.4 Registration And Attendance:

- Each handler is responsible for registering their presence with the Ring Steward prior to the commencement of the competition.
- Competitors may be allowed to walk through their routine (without their dog) at least 30 minutes prior to commencement of competition.

- No dog or handler shall be permitted to enter the competition ring after the Judge has confirmed the suitability of the ring, except for the purpose of competition in their class.
- The handler and the dog shall be in the assembly area whilst the competitor prior to them is in the ring.

6.5 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.

6.6 Competing :

- No person shall carry out punitive correction or harsh handling of a dog at any time within the precincts of the competition venue.
- Verbal command and/or encouragement maybe provided by the handler to the dog and will not be penalized. Physical touch as encouragement or reward before and after completion of a routine, points will not be penalized at any level.
- After a dog has commenced competing in a class, no substitution of handler is permitted in that class.
- For the duration of the competition, all dogs must be on a leash (or otherwise restrained (e.g in a crate), except when competing. Dogs will enter and leave the competition ring on a leash; the ring steward will take the leash from the handler after entry to the ring and return to the handler on completion of the routine.
- 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 M.K.A.

1. 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.

7.2 The Judging Panel may order the removal from competition of any dog which is deemed disorderly or unmanageable, any handler who interferes willfully with another competitor or a competitor's dog or whose behaviour is objectionable, will be excluded or ordered the removal from the competition any dog which the Judging Panel considers unfit to compete.

7.3 The following will be grounds for disqualification of the team and immediate removal from the ring:

- dog fouling or eliminating in ring;
- dog and/or handler leaving ring at any time during their routine. If dog/handler accidentally steps outside the ring, they will not be penalized;
- excessive physical manipulation of dog in competition ring;
- harsh or punitive treatment of dog in the ring or within the competition venue;
- disorderly or unmanageable dogs;
- any violation of the rules relating to dog attire or adornment;
- costume, music, or routine offensive or sexually suggestive in language or presentation;
- using real firearms or other weapon of any kind, or recorded or simulated noises of a gunshot(s) or weapon;
- use of, or having on the person of the handler, during a performance, any food, toy or motivator of any kind (except in the class permitted);
- use of any human or animal props;
- continuous barking;
- a routine which significantly contravenes the time specified in the rule 6.2.