

## ACT COMPANION DOG CLUB

### POLICY AND GUIDELINES CONCERNING THE IMPACT OF WEATHER AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ON BEHAVIOUR TRAINING CLASSES

This document defines adverse weather and other environmental conditions that may impact on Behaviour Training activities at the Club. It provides guidance for Club officials to determine whether classes should be cancelled as well as measures to mitigate the effects of such conditions.

Note: This document does not apply to the Club's sports activities. The Club's sports officials apply their own criteria to determine whether their activities proceed under various weather and other environmental conditions. Contact the relevant sports convenor for further information.

#### DEFINITIONS

*Adverse weather* – weather or other environmental conditions that are likely to negatively impact on the health and safety of most club members and their dogs participating in Behaviour Training activities. This includes, but is not limited to: very low or high temperatures, strong winds, high levels of airborne particulate matter such as smoke or dust, heavy or steady rain, thunderstorms, hail, snow and bushfire risks.

*Severe weather warning* – a warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

*Severe thunderstorm warning* – a warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

*Very hot weather* – ambient temperatures forecast or measured at the Canberra Airport of over 32°C<sup>1</sup>

*Very cold weather* – ambient temperatures forecast or measured at the Canberra Airport of less than 1°C in dry conditions, or less than 3°C in wet and windy conditions<sup>2</sup>

*Club officials* – Convenor of the Behaviour Training Sub-Committee in consultation with at least one other member of the Behaviour Training Sub-Committee or, in the absence of the Convenor, agreement between any two members of the Sub-Committee.

#### POLICY REGARDING CANCELLATION OF BEHAVIOUR TRAINING CLASSES

Weather conditions in Canberra can be very localised – particularly with respect to rain, storm and wind activity. Accordingly, it can be difficult for Club officials to make decisions about cancelling classes based on the conditions that they may observe at their home or place of work prior to a scheduled training session.

Classes will be cancelled when Club officials consider that it may be (i) unsafe or dangerous for instructors, handlers or dogs to participate in classes and/or (ii) hazardous to travel to the Club.

Factors that may result in the cancellation of classes include:

- A Severe Weather Warning issued for the ACT that is expected to negatively impact

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<sup>1</sup> Canberra Airport is the closest weather station to the Club and its observations are available at <http://www.bom.gov.au/products/IDN60903/IDN60903.94926.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> See note 1

- on the safe conduct of classes;
- A Severe Thunderstorm Warning issued for the ACT including but not limited to lightening, thunder and hail that is forecast to coincide with class times;
- Temperature of more than 32°C expected at the commencement of classes, with consideration given to humidity and wind;
- Temperature of less than 1°C expected at the commencement of classes, with consideration given to humidity and wind;
- An ACT Government Public Health Alert where the smoky air (PM2.5) health advisory category is rated as 'Unhealthy for all' or more hazardous;<sup>3</sup>
- An ACT Emergency Services Agency bushfire alert at 'Advice' level (or higher) that has the potential to impact on the Club; and/or
- Any other adverse weather or environmental conditions that are reasonably expected to negatively impact on the safe conduct of classes or the well-being of instructors, handlers and dogs. These may include the effects of frost, fog and wind-borne dust.

### **Decision to cancel classes or to continue as scheduled**

The decision to cancel classes or to continue as scheduled will be made by the Convenor of the Behaviour Training Sub-Committee in consultation with at least one other member of the Behaviour Training Sub-Committee or, in the absence of the Convenor, agreement between any two members of the Sub-Committee.

Very hot or very cold weather conditions may not necessarily result in the cancellation of classes but Club officials may post a note on the CDC Facebook page suggesting that individual handlers should consider their dog's tolerance and their own comfort level when deciding whether or not to attend classes under the prevailing conditions (see 'Guidelines for training in hot and cold weather' below).

Where possible, a decision to cancel classes is to be made at least one hour before classes are scheduled to start to enable notification to be added to the Club's Facebook page. Where feasible, session managers, instructors and shop staff will be contacted directly via email or text message.

Classes that are cancelled will not be rescheduled and no monies will be refunded. In the event that classes are cancelled, no training will be undertaken in the clubhouse or under the clubhouse's verandahs.

In the event that adverse weather or environmental conditions cause the last class of term to be cancelled, the class instructor will assess each handler and dog based on their performance in the previous classes during term to determine progress to the next level.

Classes may also be cancelled after they have commenced if weather or other environmental conditions deteriorate and are likely to negatively impact on the safe conduct of classes or the well-being of instructors, handlers and dogs.

### **GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING IN HOT AND COLD WEATHER**

Instructors have the discretion to modify their lesson plans, cut short their class or direct handlers to leave the class if they have any concerns about their own welfare or the welfare of handlers and dogs. Where possible, instructors will set up their class in the shade during

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<sup>3</sup> ACT Health advises that it applies an 'Unhealthy for all' smoky air health advisory category where the average concentration of very small particulate matter (PM2.5) in the air across a 24-hour period ranges from 40-106.9.

warm or hot weather, noting the space requirements of individual dogs in class.

Instructors are expected to dress appropriately for the weather conditions and should remind class members to do the same. Appropriate dress includes:

- Beanie and lots of layered clothing (if the weather is cold and/or wet)
- Battery-heated jackets and vests (if the weather is cold)
- Shade hat and sunscreen (if the weather is sunny and/or hot)
- Sturdy, outdoor enclosed footwear (Note: for safety reasons thongs, sandals and fashion heels are not permitted in any class)

Please be aware that hand warmers (air activated single use heat packs) can pose a risk to dogs if ingested.<sup>4</sup>

Instructors should use their discretion when conducting classes under some weather conditions, noting that the safety of dogs, handlers and instructors is paramount.

### **Hot weather conditions**

In hot weather, the following dogs may be affected more than others (see Attachment 1):

- Black or dark coloured dogs;
- Dogs with naturally dense coats;
- Brachycephalic (snub-nosed flat-faced) breeds;<sup>5</sup>
- Overweight dogs; and
- Larger sized dogs.

When classes are held in hot weather, Session Managers may provide additional buckets of water close to where activities are occurring to enable handlers to give their dog the opportunity to drink water without crowding around the same water source. Handlers of deep-chested large breeds prone to bloat (gastric torsion)<sup>6</sup> may need to limit or reduce their dog's level of physical exertion in class if their dog drinks large volumes of water to cool down.

Instructors should be aware that mats used in class may be affected by the heat. Light-coloured mats will reflect heat while dark-coloured mats will absorb heat and dogs may be less likely to want to settle on them.

Instructors should remind handlers that they are responsible for the welfare of their own dog and that they may opt to leave the class early if they have any concerns about their dog. Instructors should also be vigilant for signs of heat stress such as rapid or heavy panting, bright red tongue, drooling, agitation, restlessness, very red or pale gums, lethargy, muscle tremors, and lack of responsiveness to familiar cues. Advise handlers to immediately seek shade and to douse their dog with cool (not cold) water starting with the head and neck and moving to the abdomen, groin, and legs if heat stress is suspected.

In warm or hot weather handlers may opt to use cooling aids for their dogs such as cooling mats, cooling coats and bandanas during class. Instructors should remind handlers to monitor the use of these aids to ensure that the cooling effect is occurring.

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<sup>4</sup> Hand warmers should be stored and disposed of carefully as the iron content can be toxic to dogs.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Pug, French Bulldog, Bulldog, Boston Terrier, Shih Tzu, Pekingese, Affenpinscher, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Lhasa Apso, Griffon Bruxellois, King Charles Spaniel, Boxer, Bull Mastiff, Neapolitan Mastiff, Chihuahua, Chow, Dogue de Bordeaux, Japanese Chin, Rottweiler

<sup>6</sup> For example, Great Dane, Irish Setter, Weimaraner, St. Bernard, Akita, Boxer, Basset Hound, German Shepherd Dog

## Cold weather conditions

In cold weather, the following dogs may be affected more than others (see Attachment 2):

- Smaller dogs;
- Underweight dogs;
- Fine-haired dogs; and
- Elderly dogs

Handlers may opt to use wind and/or water proof coats and insulating mats in class during cold weather. Instructors should remind handlers to use a mat in cold weather for any class activities where the dog is required to remain sitting or lying on the ground (eg practicing 'stays' or settling in class).

Signs of stress that may be observed in cold weather include shivering or trembling, lethargy, pale or blue gums, hunched body posture and unwillingness to respond to familiar cues. Dogs exhibiting these signs should be removed from class to avoid further exposure and if possible, wrapped in warmed blankets. A hot water bottle wrapped in a towel against the dog's abdomen can also help.

Other environmental factors may exacerbate the impact of hot or cold weather. For example, moisture on the ground or strong winds during cold weather and high humidity in hot conditions.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACT Public Health Alerts: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/public-health-alerts>

ACT Air Quality Ratings: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/environmental-monitoring/monitoring-and-regulating-air-0#air-quality-table>

Bureau of Meteorology – Severe Weather Warnings: [http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-services/severe-weather-knowledge-centre/WarningsInformation\\_SW\\_SWW.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-services/severe-weather-knowledge-centre/WarningsInformation_SW_SWW.shtml)

Bureau of Meteorology – Severe Thunderstorm Warnings: [http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-services/severe-weather-knowledge-centre/WarningsInformation\\_SW\\_STSW.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-services/severe-weather-knowledge-centre/WarningsInformation_SW_STSW.shtml)

Bureau of Meteorology – ACT Warnings: <http://www.bom.gov.au/act/warnings/index.shtml?ref=hdr>

Willy Weather – Forecast and Real-time temperature, rainfall and wind data: <https://www.willyweather.com.au/act/canberra/canberra.html>

Emergency Services Agency - News and Alerts: <https://esa.act.gov.au/cbr-be-emergency-ready/bushfire-ready/bushfire-warning-messages>

Emergency Services Agency – Bushfire Warning Messages: <https://esa.act.gov.au/news-alerts>

Tufts Animal Care and Condition – Weather Safety Scale: <https://vet.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/tacc.pdf>

ATTACHMENT 1

 <b>How hot is too hot?</b>						
°C	 °F				 <b>KEY</b>	<b>OTHER FACTORS</b>
15°	60°	1	1	1	1. No evidence of risk: Have fun outside!	+1 If obese
18°	65°	1	1	2		+1 If brachycephalic breed
21°	70°	2	2	3	2. Risk is unlikely: Have fun outside, but be careful!	+1 If less than 6 months old or elderly
23°	75°	3	3	3		-1 If area is shaded from sun
26°	80°	3	3	4	3. Unsafe potential, depending on breed. Keep an eye on your pet outdoors.	-1 If water is available
29°	85°	4	4	5		
32°	90°	5	5	5	4. Dangerous weather developing. Use caution.	
35°	95°	5	5	5		
37°	100°	5	5	5	5. Potentially life-threatening heat. Avoid prolonged outdoor activity.	
40°	105°	5	5	5		
43°	110°	5	5	5		



Source: adapted from The Tufts Animal Care and Condition (TACC) scales

## ATTACHMENT 2

 <b>how cold is too cold?</b>						
°C  °F					 <b>KEY</b>	<b>OTHER FACTORS</b>
15°	60°	1	1	1	<b>1. No evidence of risk:</b> Have fun outside!	<b>+2</b> If wet weather is present  <b>-1</b> If Northern breed or heavy coat  <b>-1</b> If dog is acclimated to cold
12°	55°	1	1	1		
10°	50°	1	1	1		
7°	45°	2	2	1	<b>2. Risk is unlikely:</b> Have fun outside, but be careful!	(faded text from previous row)
4°	40°	3	3	2		
1°	35°	3	3	3	<b>3. Unsafe potential,</b> depending on breed. Keep an eye on your pet outdoors.	(faded text from previous row)
-1°	30°	3	3	3		
-4°	25°	4	4	3		
-6°	20°	5	4	3	<b>4. Dangerous</b> weather developing. Use caution.	(faded text from previous row)
-9°	15°	5	4	4		
-12°	10°	5	5	5	<b>5. Potentially</b> life-threatening cold. Avoid prolonged outdoor activity.	(faded text from previous row)
-15°	5°	5	5	5		
-17°	0°	5	5	5		

Source: adapted from The Tufts Animal Care and Condition (TACC) scales

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