



ACT COMPANION DOG CLUB

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDELINES

[Adopted 25 May 2021]

Purpose of the Social Media policy and guidelines

This document provides ACT Companion Dog Club members with information on how the Club's social media channels are structured and authorised. It also sets out behavioural expectations regarding members' conduct on social media, including but not limited to the Club's social media channels.

For the purposes of this document, social media is defined as "any information, conversation or activity that occurs online, where Club officials or other members share or discuss information that might impact on the Club's services or reputation". A Club official is defined as (i) a member of the Club holding the position of Club instructor, member of a Sub-committee, member of the Main Committee or session manager and (ii) the Club's office manager.

This document forms part of the Club's governance framework and supports *Club Rule 24* that states, inter alia, that:

Communication by and between members must always be respectful and courteous and must not be offensive, aggressive, defamatory, threatening, discriminatory, obscene, profane, harassing, embarrassing, intimidating, sexually explicit, bullying, hateful, racist, or otherwise inappropriate. This includes face-to-face and written communication and communication through other channels including social media.¹

The Club maintains two types of authorised social media channels – (i) club-wide social media pages used to promote the Club and its activities and (ii) Activity Group pages which support specific dog sports and activities.

The current authorised channels are:

- (i) Club-wide channels
 - Club website www.actcdc.org.au
 - Club public Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ACTCompaniondogclub/>
 - Club private Instructors Facebook page

- (ii) Specific activity groups
 - ACTCDC Agility
 - ACTCDC Agility Instructors
 - ACTCDC Dances with Dogs/Trick Dog
 - ACTCDC Flyball
 - ACTCDC Classic Companion Drill Team

¹ See ACT Companion Dog Club: *Club Rules* (Approved 23 February 2021), available at <https://actcdc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Club-rules-Approved-2021.pdf>

All Club members are bound by this document and are expected to conduct themselves appropriately when using the Club's social media channels or other channels where the Club, Club officials or Club members may be identified.

This document will be published on the Club's website and promulgated to the Club's Social Media administrators and editors for distribution to all Activity Groups.

Aims and rules

The primary aim of the Club's social media channels is to promote the Club and to facilitate its training services, endorsed events and dog sports activities. See the guidelines below for information about how to use the official channels managed by the Club.

All social media activity – including but not limited to website content, status updates, posts, videos, comments and messages – must aim to promote the Club or dog sport group in a positive way and should respect and maintain the privacy of others.

All members are expected to adhere to the Club's overarching *Club Rule* regarding communication by and between members on the Club's social media channels and on other social media channels outside the Club where the Club, Club officials or Club members may be identified.

The Club's social media use shall adhere to the following rules:

- The Club's social media channels represent the organisation as a whole and should seek to maintain a professional and uniform tone. Where possible the impression should remain one of a single organisation rather than individual, unconnected activities.
- Users will not knowingly post incorrect, defamatory, harassing, abusive, discriminatory or misleading content.
- The Club will not allow content that criticises, marginalises or denigrates individuals or groups within the Club.
- Users will only post content that endorses rewards-based force-free approaches to dog training and emphasises the bond between dog and handler based on mutual trust and respect.
- Users will be polite and respectful of all people and communities with whom they interact on social media.
- The Club will not tolerate any forms of stalking, bullying or marginalising of any individual or group within the Club or outside the Club.
- Users will respect copyright, intellectual property, and other applicable laws when using social media and not upload inappropriate content to any of the Club's social media channels.
- Users will not endorse or promote (including likes, comments, shares or links) any commercial products, services or businesses unless prior approval has been obtained from the Club's Main Committee (Note: sponsorship will not be accepted from any pet shops or similar businesses that sell companion animals, ie dogs and cats).
- Users will treat everything placed on social media as public information and have no expectation that it will remain private even if it is part of personal social media use.
- Users will not offer advice or support or comment on topics outside their area of expertise or responsibility.

Violations of the policy and guidelines

Club members who contravene the Club's social media policy or guidelines will:

- Receive a warning from the Club's social media administrator or group editor (as appropriate);

- Have a specific post, comment or other content removed by the administrator or group editor;
- Have their membership of the channel blocked until further notice; and
- Be provided with a written explanation of why the action has been taken.

Persistent or serious breaches of this policy and guidelines will be referred to the Club's Main Committee for consideration and further action. This may involve removal and permanent blocking from the relevant group/s pages.

Access to the relevant group/s pages may be reinstated if the member who breaches the policy and guidelines acknowledges the breach and gives a written undertaking to the Club's Main Committee that they understand the nature of the breach and that no further breaches will occur in the future.

Should further breaches occur despite this undertaking, the steps described above will be taken and the member will be blocked from future membership or use of all the Club's social media channels.

The Main Committee also has powers under the Club's *Constitution* to take steps to suspend or expel any member who acts in a manner which, in the opinion of the Committee, is prejudicial to the interests of the Club. This may include persistent or serious breaches of this policy and guidelines.

Guidelines for use of social media pages

These guidelines are intended to assist Club members who have administrative or editorial responsibilities for the Club's social media channels.

Content

The administrators of the Club's social media channels should monitor the general sharing of information and conversations on these channels and ensure they align with this policy and guidelines.

Facebook posts should focus on reminders related to Club activities (eg intakes, session dates, class cancellations, membership renewals, workshops, annual general meeting etc). Posts that provide information or request responses should be posted with sufficient notice to give members the opportunity to consider the information and respond within a specified timeframe.

Social media posts should contain sufficient and relevant information and may include links to further information, where appropriate (noting the conditions above about commercial endorsements or promotions).

Posts on the Club's social media channels should be accompanied by some visual element (eg photo or short video) as this attracts more attention than a pure text post. Every effort should be made to gain permission from any individual featured in a photo or video before the content is published (noting that the Club maintains a 'Do not photograph' register that records the wishes of members when they join or renew their membership).

Where individual photographers or videographers are known, every effort should be made to credit the creator in the post or caption.

Timing

Social media posts should be posted within specific time frames:

- Posts related to Behaviour Training classes:
 - When bookings open for classes
 - When classes are fully booked
 - At least one hour before classes are cancelled due to weather or other factors
- Posts relating to workshops and events:
 - When event bookings open
 - When the event is fully booked
 - One week before the event
 - The morning of the event
- Trial and competition reminders (for trials and competitions hosted by the Club)
 - When entries are open
 - One week before entries close
- Trial and competition promotion (for trials and competitions attended by Club members)
 - The morning of the event
 - Within 24-48 hours after the event

Administrator and editor responsibilities

General

- The administrators of the Club's club-wide channels and administrators and editors of Activity Groups must be financial Club members.
- It is desirable that at least one administrator of the Club's club-wide channels is a member of the Club's Main Committee. If this is not feasible, a member of the Main Committee will be appointed to liaise with the administrator and to oversee the Club's social media activity as Social Media Co-ordinator.
- The administrators of the Club's club-wide channels and editors of Activity Groups must be approved by the Club's Main Committee at the earliest opportunity after each Annual General Meeting and at any time during the year when role changes are required.
- Up to three representatives of the Club's Main Committee may act as administrators of the Club's website and other club-wide social media channels at any one time.
- Up to two representatives nominated by the relevant sport's Sub-Committee may act as editors of each Activity Group at any one time.
- Activity on the Club's club-wide social media channels will regularly be reported to and monitored by the Club's Main Committee through the Social Media Co-ordinator.
- Administrators and group editors are required to monitor content and take appropriate action if this policy and guidelines are contravened (see 'Violations' above).
- Administrators and group editors should provide advice to users and reply to posts in a timely, positive and supportive manner wherever possible or appropriate.
- Administrators and editors must ensure that only appropriate content is published.
- Administrators and editors are expected to behave and express themselves appropriately and in ways that are consistent with the Club's *Constitution, Club Rules* and policies.
- A listing of the Club's administrators and editors is maintained by the Main Committee's Social Media Co-ordinator.

Facebook activity group administration

- All Facebook Activity Groups or other social media channels focusing on specific Club activities must be approved by the Club's Main Committee prior to their establishment.

This should occur as soon as possible after the first Main Committee meeting following the Annual General Meeting each year.

- The aim of the Activity Group channels is to facilitate communication and organisation about the group's activities. This may include the sharing and discussion of training tips and ideas, social interaction, event organisation etc.
- The Club's Activity Groups will be created and maintained as Secret or Closed groups and access to the group will require approval by the group's editor(s).
- Membership of Activity Groups must be managed and restricted to people who are financial members of the Club and who are actively engaged in the dog sport or training activity relevant to the group. Membership must be audited as soon as possible after the Annual General Meeting each year by the group editor(s) to cull any unfinancial or inactive members.

Policy endorsement

This policy and guidelines are endorsed by the Club's Main Committee and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Related documents

The following documents are maintained by the Main Committee's Social Media Co-ordinator:

- A listing of the Club's administrators and editors
 - A register of all the communication methods (including social media) used by the Main Committee and Sub-Committees
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