

## **WCRL RULES OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

Rally Obedience sport promotes being active with one's pet in a fun and inviting social atmosphere. All WCRL competitors, officials, and event personnel shall conduct themselves in a professional manner and seek to uphold, and enhance where possible, the image of the sport and WCRL through such conduct and actions.

The following rules of conduct and disciplinary actions are provided as a framework for handling incidents and infractions, to manage risk to an acceptable level.

### **SECTION C-1. INHERENT RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND AUTHORITY**

WCRL holds and has reserved unto itself certain inherent rights, privileges, and powers in connection with its conduct of business and license of events. Among those rights, privileges, and powers are the determination of the manner in which its events shall be conducted. Along with these are the judgment and discretion to take actions and impose penalties and sanctions on an individual, group of individuals, organization, or organizations who demonstrate conduct that is deemed contrary to the best interests of WCRL or the sport of Rally Obedience.

#### Authority to create a Disciplinary Action Committee

The Organizing Committee may delegate their authority and responsibility by appointing a Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC). The DAC must consist of the Event Chairman, Event Secretary, and at least three but no more than five other responsible individuals. Preferably, these should be members of the Organizing Committee or elected officials of the host group(s), but may also be competitors who are deemed to be impartial. All members of the DAC must be capable of carrying out the provisions of these rules and procedures.

#### **Roles & Responsibilities**

The host group(s), as represented by the event's Organizing Committee, and the event's judge(s) share in the responsibility for maintaining these standards of conduct. Each competitor and official at an event, including judges, members of the Organizing Committee, and other key personnel,

- have the responsibility to read and understand WCRL's rules and regulations, including these rules of conduct and disciplinary actions, before entering, conducting, or officiating an event,
- each competitor and official acknowledges through their entry to or act in an official capacity at a WCRL event that their participation in the event is a privilege and not a right,
- by virtue of their entry or act in an official capacity at the event, a competitor and each such official acknowledges and agrees to comply with all WCRL rules and regulations, and
- each competitor and official agrees to accept any sanctions or penalties, as defined herein, that may be imposed or assessed for failure to comply herewith.

#### The Judge

The judge has sole responsibility for determining when it is appropriate to excuse a dog and competitor from the ring, based on the rules of performance or for matters related to competitor misconduct. The judge shall file a written complaint with the Organizing Committee in situations where:

- a competitor may be guilty of an abusive, subversive act or other willful disregard for the rules as defined in Section C-2, or
- where the appearance of abuse or "aggression" as defined exists.

The judge may issue the competitor either a reprimand or a courtesy warning, where:

- an incident was questionable as to its nature, in appearance or in fact, but where no abusive conduct or willful disregard for the rules was displayed, and
- competitor misconduct was not readily apparent to others.

### The Organizing Committee

The Organizing Committee, or Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) when used, has the responsibility to determine if misconduct should result in expulsion of a competitor and/or dogs from the event. The Organizing Committee (or DAC) shall have full authority to hold hearings and execute sanctions as it deems appropriate based upon evidence brought before it as described herein. The Committee shall prepare a written report, using the “Disciplinary Action Complaint Hearing Report” form, on any actions brought before it, and include that report as an attachment to Post-Trial Summary Form to be filed with WCRL following the event.

The Chairman of the Committee shall have the authority and responsibility to issue reprimands for minor incidents of misconduct as defined in Section C-2. These are incidents that have no “appearance” of being abusive nor indicate a willful disregard for the rules. They include, but are not limited to, smoking in the ring, displaying a training collar in or about the ring or warmup area, or similar infractions. The Chairman shall retain all notices of reprimand, whether they were issued by the Chairman or by one or more of the event’s judges, until the earlier of the conclusion of the event or receipt of two notices for reprimand of similar incidents by the same participant(s) are accumulated. In the latter case, a Committee hearing shall be called as soon as practicable to consider the charge, including the failure to respect the judge or Chairman’s authority regarding the initial notice of reprimand.

It should be noted that matters of misconduct extend beyond the ring. Any person may file a written complaint with the Organizing Committee (or DAC) whether the incident occurred inside or outside the performance ring, and whether or not witnessed by the judge. The written complaint shall include at a minimum—

- The name(s) of the competitor(s), dog(s), and/or other persons involved in the incident
- The time and place of the incident
- A description of the incident
- Any known circumstances or actions leading to the incident
- The names and contact information of any witnesses to the incident
- The date, name, and signature of the complainant

### **SECTION C-2. TYPES OF INFRACTIONS & POSSIBLE SANCTIONS AT AN EVENT**

#### 1. *Abusive, subversive act, or other willful disregard of the rules—*

This shall include any and all acts demonstrating harshness or abuse toward a dog; a lack of respect for a judge, other official, or competitor; publicly exhibiting poor sportsmanship; or undermining the intent of the rules or authority of an official. These include but are not limited to:

- Acts demonstrating harshness or abuse toward a dog
  - Shouting or screaming harshly at a dog
  - Behavior that displays intent to intimidate, threaten, or harm a dog
  - Making harsh corrections to a dog in or out of the ring
- Exhibiting poor sportsmanship
  - A subversive and/or ostentatious exit from the ring during or following a performance
  - Inciting others to act or otherwise exhibit poor sportsmanship outside the ring

- Being argumentative, acts of intimidation and/or impolite confrontation of judges, officials, or other competitors
- Willful misconduct or interference with a competitor's right to show
- Willful disregard of the rules
  - Violation of procedural rules (for example: facility specific rules, smoking in the ring, display of training collars, or other special rules itemized in the Premium List or posted at the event)
  - Compulsive, correctional training on the grounds
  - Creating excessive delays
  - Willful misrepresentation on entry forms
  - Willful misrepresentation of animals at a WCRL-sponsored event

*Event Sanction:* Expulsion from the event. All scores earned in the previous trials conducted as part of the current event (including on contiguous days) shall be canceled and all awards forfeited.

## 2. *Acts of Dog Aggression or Demonstration of Unmanageable/Uncontrollable Dog Behavior—*

- Any act of dog aggression that indicates a possible risk of injury to a person, another dog, or damage to property
- Demonstration of unmanageable behavior such as a dog that is continually barking, continually lunging at others or other dogs in a playful way, or otherwise disrupting the event

*Event Sanction:* If a dog is found to be aggressive or unmanageable, the dog must be removed from the show grounds immediately and any remaining runs are forfeited for the event, including for any subsequent, contiguous days. Where immediate removal is not possible, the dog must be confined or otherwise observed, kept under control, and non-accessible for safety reasons until the dog can be removed from the show grounds.

Where a dog bites a person and a puncture wound is found, there shall be an automatic one-month suspension and a report filed with WCRL office the next business day following the incident. The report shall include statements from concerned parties (i.e., dog owner/handler, person attacked, physician, veterinarian, and any principal witnesses), as well as a summary of actions taken by the Event Organizing Committee.

Where an actual bite of a person is involved, the incident shall be reported to local authorities in compliance with state and local laws.

## 3. *Other Acts of Misconduct Not Categorized Above—*

In many cases, the classification of an infraction may not be well defined. In such cases, the Committee shall look to the intent behind the situation, as well as the act itself in making their determination.

A person's sole admission that they were unaware or that an act was unintended is insufficient evidence in making a determination of intent. The Committee must collectively weigh the evidence presented, including representations of all parties and witnesses. Based upon their complete evaluation, the Committee shall issue a ruling and order sanctions commensurate with the act in seeking to uphold these Rules of Conduct and the best interests of the sport.

*Event Sanction:* A formal warning that the incident is in violation of the rules of conduct by the Committee followed by a second occurrence of a like incident shall result in expulsion from the event. (A second occurrence would be treated as a willful disregard for the rules and authority of the Committee, resulting in expulsion, in a timely manner, of the competitor and any dogs owned and/or handled by the competitor.)

### **SECTION C-3. EVENT PROCEDURES**

When an infraction occurs at an event, the witnessing party to the incident may file a written complaint with the event's Organizing Committee (or DAC). Report of the infraction shall be in writing and must include:

- The name(s) of the competitor(s) and/or dog(s) involved in the incident
- The time and place of the incident
- A complete description of the incident
- Any known circumstances or actions leading to the incident
- The names of witnesses to the incident
- The date, name, and signature of the complainant

The complaint shall be filed with the Chairman immediately following the incident, or as soon as practical thereafter, so that the matter can promptly be recorded and resolved, if required, by the conduct of a formal hearing.

When an incident occurs, the Chairman should make an assessment of risk. Where there is continuing risk of harm to a person or dog, action should be taken immediately to remove the key element of risk until such time as a hearing can be held.

#### Scheduling the Hearing or Waiver Thereof

The Committee Chairman must notify the Accused of the complaint in a timely manner and schedule a disciplinary hearing to take place as soon as possible. The hearing ideally will take place within two hours following report of the incident and absolutely must take place prior to the close of the day. The Chairman can begin gathering statements from witnesses and other evidence relevant to the incident while the trial is still ongoing, in preparation of the hearing.

If the Accused is willing to sign a statement acknowledging that they are guilty of the act, the infraction must still be evaluated by the Committee, though a full formal hearing may be considered not necessary. In that case the Committee may decide to forego the investigation phase of the deliberations and the calling of any witnesses, as deemed appropriate for the circumstances. The Committee still must determine what sanction is appropriate pursuant to these guidelines and issue a final statement as provided under Disciplinary Hearing Procedures below.

#### Disciplinary Hearing Procedures

The Committee shall convene a hearing for written complaints or upon receipt of two reprimand notices for similar incidents by the same participants. The following order of process shall be followed as appropriate to the circumstances (see Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) Guidelines & Disciplinary Action Incident Report Form):

- 1) The Chairman shall appoint a Committee member to take detailed notes of the proceedings.
- 2) The Chairman shall instruct all involved parties that may appear before the Committee that all matters discussed are confidential.
- 3) The Committee shall have the complaint read in the presence of the person against whom the complaint has been brought (hereinafter referred to as the "Accused").
- 4) The Accused shall in turn be provided the opportunity to respond to the complaint and to provide any suitable evidence in support of their position.
- 5) The Committee shall then ask for further comment or clarification from the complainant, if deemed necessary. If further comment is made, the Accused shall be afforded an opportunity to respond to the extent deemed appropriate.

6) The Committee shall then call for testimony of witness(es) to the incident to provide an objective account of the incident. The Committee, Complainant, and the Accused shall be afforded an opportunity to question the witness(es) to the extent deemed appropriate in order that all relevant facts to the complaint are understood.

7) The Committee shall then excuse the Complainant, the Accused, and all witnesses. The Committee must then evaluate the evidence and make a determination regarding the incident. If the complaint is not to be upheld, then the Complainant and the Accused shall be notified accordingly, and the hearing closed. If, however, the complaint is to be upheld, then the Committee must determine and issue sanctions pursuant to the guidelines set out in Section C-2.

8) The Committee should consider inviting to the hearing a WCRL Board member, if present, and/or an impartial judge to serve as an observer and/or consultant. This person shall not have a vote and shall serve only to provide objective input regarding procedure and/or rules' interpretations as they may apply.

Each Committee member shall be responsible for maintaining confidentiality of all proceedings.

#### Hearing Documentation

The Committee proceedings shall be documented in detail on the Disciplinary Action Incident Report Form. The record of the proceedings must be signed by the "Secretary" and the Committee Chairman.

#### Rulings

All Committee findings must be made by the Chairman to the Accused in the presence of the Committee. Said warnings must include—

- A statement of the nature of the infraction(s)
- The findings of the Committee
- Any sanctions imposed
- The consequences of the infraction(s)

#### Report Findings

Within five days of the completion of the event, the Organizing Committee (or DAC) and the judge, if involved, shall file a written notice with WCRL regarding the incident. The report shall include all documentation collected and recorded regarding the incident as stated above.

### **SECTION C-4. WCRL RESPONSIBILITIES & SANCTIONS AT AN EVENT**

Conduct of an event pursuant to WCRL rules and regulations are the sole responsibility of the host group. This includes any incidents relative to Rules of Conduct and their Disciplinary Actions. The host group is solely responsible for carrying out due process of disciplinary action proceedings as set forth herein relative to any reported incidents that arise relative to the hosted event. Failure to do so could find the host group liable for recourse from others for damages that may arise as a result of failure to uphold their responsibilities for conduct of the event.

#### WCRL Actions

Once a notice of initial expulsion by a host group is received by WCRL, a letter of reprimand shall be issued to the offending party, with a copy to the host's Organizing Committee chairperson and/or secretary. Said reprimand shall include—

- A statement that the nature of the offense and its consequences have been logged as a part of their record with WCRL
- A statement regarding consequences of a future similar offense when appropriate
- A statement of requirements, if any, for reinstatement and the eligibility therefor where a suspension has been imposed

- Notification if further review of the case by WCRL, should any be deemed necessary in the sole discretion of WCRL; if a case is to be placed under further review, the letter must also include:
  - a request for a written response to the charges, and
  - notification to the offender that their response must be received at WCRL's office within 10 days of receipt of official notice, or a plea of "no contest" shall be entered

The letter shall be sent to the offender by registered mail within 10 days following WCRL's receipt of the Disciplinary Action Incident Report.

#### WCRL Supplementary Review

WCRL reserves the right to convene a hearing to determine if more severe or less severe sanctions are warranted than issued by the host group, though it is under no obligation to do so. WCRL may appoint a committee on matters that require further review. If a hearing is to be held, WCRL shall issue the written notice<sup>1</sup> of further deliberations no later than 10 days after receipt of the Disciplinary Action Incident Report. This letter shall include a request for a written response to the charges, and notify the offender that their response must be received at WCRL's office within 10 days of receipt of official notice. Failure to respond as required will be accepted by WCRL as acknowledgment of the charges and a plea of no contest to WCRL's decision.

In cases of dog aggression where a puncture wound is found, WCRL shall extend the suspension for such an occurrence to a period of no less than one year to life. Where mitigating circumstances are found (e.g., person intervenes into an encounter between two dogs), discretion may be exercised in rendering judgment regarding long-term suspension.

As part of a supplemental hearing, WCRL may perform its own independent investigation and query witnesses in arriving at its decision. WCRL, upon arriving at a decision, shall notify the offender of their final decision. This notification shall be within 10 days of receipt of offender's response or the date upon which the response was due, whichever is earlier. The notices sent by WCRL shall be sent to the offender at their address as registered on WCRL official records, or at the address provided on the event entry form, if different. Any actions related to this matter shall be conducted in the State of Texas, unless otherwise approved by WCRL.

#### Suspension

When a suspension is imposed, WCRL shall send a letter to the individual(s) or organization, via registered mail, regarding the pending suspension. The individual(s) or organization has a period of 10 days from receipt of notification to appeal the decision of WCRL; this notice of appeal must be received in writing at the WCRL office as specified in Section C-7 of these regulations. If the suspension is upheld following the appeal, the person's name, city, and state, and list of all owned dogs registered with WCRL and USDAA, or a dog where it is a case of aggression, shall be published, indicating the reason for and term of the suspension. Notification of the suspension shall be made to all WCRL Trial Hosts and USDAA Affiliated Groups through a published statement on the usdaa.com and rallydogs.com web sites in the "Group Services" section.

Upon receipt of notification of a second incident that has resulted in expulsion from an event, WCRL shall automatically impose a suspension of the competitor and/or dog for a period of not less than six months and not more than two years, except in the case of aggression, which shall be indefinitely, subject to the dog owner's submission of a request for reinstatement (see Section C-5). Upon a recurrence of acts by the competitor and/or dog following the suspension period, WCRL shall convene a hearing to determine and impose additional sanctions. Those sanctions shall carry a suspension of not less than one additional year to life, depending on the nature of the misconduct.

## **SECTION C-5. REINSTATEMENT FROM SUSPENSION**

A person who is the subject of a suspension may apply for reinstatement after 75% of the suspension period has passed. A request for reinstatement may not be submitted more than once in any six-month period, except that in the case of aggression, not more than once in twelve-month period. Any suspension related to dog aggression shall require a request for reinstatement in order to lift the suspension, and the dog's owner must submit sufficient evidence of behavioral modification and other evidentiary information to assure the likelihood of another offense is not probable.

## **SECTION C-6. GENERAL COMPLAINTS**

Any individual, club, or association may file a complaint against another individual, club, or association for conduct deemed against the best interests of WCRL or the sport of Rally. Any complaint that arises at an event must be filed with the event's Organizing Committee for due process unless the complaint is against the host organization of the event, which may place the Organizing Committee in a conflict of interest.

Complaints not under the jurisdiction of the host organization at the event, or where a complaint is against the host organization or its representatives, shall be filed in writing within 10 days<sup>2</sup> of the incident, at the WCRL office along with a fee of \$100.00. If the complaint is upheld, the fee will be refunded to the Complainant.

A Complainant shall file a written complaint with WCRL, in a form comparable to a complaint to be filed with an event's Organizing Committee as set forth in Section C-3. No verbal complaints shall be accepted. WCRL shall review and respond to a complaint within 30 days<sup>1</sup> following its receipt. Upon acceptance of WCRL to hear the complaint, the charged individual or organization shall then be formally notified of the charges by certified mail. The charged party shall then provide a written response to the alleged charges no later than 10 days after receipt of notification. WCRL shall make a preliminary ruling and notify the two parties accordingly. If further evidence is offered, then WCRL shall reconvene a hearing in order to evaluate any additional evidence.

After evaluation of the evidence, WCRL shall issue a ruling regarding the merits of the complaint and take appropriate disciplinary action. These disciplinary actions may vary from written reprimands (public or private), suspensions, sanctions, fines, or other penalties levied against the individual or organization. The action shall be dependent upon the severity, nature, and frequency of the infraction(s), subject to guidelines established herein. Once the pending course of action has been ruled upon, WCRL shall provide a written notification to the Complainant and the Accused. WCRL may appoint a committee on matters that require further review.

## **SECTION C-7. INITIAL APPEAL OF SANCTION OR SUSPENSION**

Upon receipt of notice of sanction or suspension, an individual or organization may appeal to WCRL to have a case further reviewed. Such appeal must be made in writing and include a basis for such appeal. If WCRL upholds the sanctions or suspensions, said actions will be retroactive to the date of the incident. If the individual or organization declines to file an appeal with WCRL within 10 days following receipt of notice of suspension, such inaction shall constitute acceptance of the proposed sanction. In such cases, the impending actions against the individual or organization shall be automatically implemented.

During the appeals process, the individual or organization may present any additional evidence, including testimony of witness(es) if any, regarding the incident. Once received, WCRL will examine all evidence regarding the incident(s) and infraction(s). WCRL may appoint a committee on matters that require further review. A written notice of the decision shall be issued to the offending individual or organization. The decision shall be final. If the individual or organization has participated in any WCRL-sanctioned events since the incident, all placements, titles, and awards obtained during the suspension period shall be forfeited.

## SECTION C-8. DEFINITIONS OF POSSIBLE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS & SANCTIONS

The following are descriptions of possible disciplinary actions and sanctions:

- *Courtesy Warning*—a verbal warning issued by the judge, Organizing Committee Chairman, or DAC Chairman. The decision to reprimand versus issue a courtesy warning shall be based on the perception by the judge or chairman of the situation as it might appear to spectators pursuant to guidelines established herein. Determining factors in favor of issuing a reprimand shall be whether the incident warranted immediate dismissal from the ring and whether the incident is one that would be deemed unacceptable (not in the best interest of the sport) if it recurred.

When an incident may be questionable as to its acceptability, or otherwise might escalate to a point of not being acceptable, the judge may excuse the competitor from the ring and issue a courtesy warning. This situation generally relates to an incident where an incident is marginal, such as when a competitor's tolerance level is eroding as a result of a performance on the decline. In this case, typically the competitor should be excused from the ring in anticipation of a possible abusive act of poor sportsmanship that could result from a "temporary loss of control."

A Courtesy Warning may also be given for any incident that is not readily visible to others that a judge views as not in the best interest of the sport though the competitor is not excused from the ring.

- *Reprimand*—a written warning (special form not required) issued by the judge or Chairman, and held by the Chairman. A second reprimand of a similar nature shall be treated as a "Written Complaint," thus resulting in a disciplinary hearing.

When an infraction so warranting occurs, the judge or Chairman shall issue a reprimand, filed with the Committee Chairman. Report of the reprimand shall be in writing and must include:

- The name(s) of the competitor(s) and/or dog(s) involved in the incident
- The time and place of the incident
- A description of the incident
- Any known circumstances or actions leading to the incident
- The names of any witnesses to the incident
- The date, name, and signature of the complainant

The reprimand shall be filed with the Committee immediately following the incident, or as soon as practical thereafter, so that the matter can be promptly recorded and/or resolved.

- *Warning*—a formal warning is issued by the Organizing Committee or DAC following a disciplinary hearing, stating that an incident is in violation of the rules of conduct, and a second occurrence of a like incident shall result in expulsion from the event. A second occurrence would be treated as a willful disregard for the rules and authority of the Committee, resulting in immediate expulsion from the show of the competitor and any dogs owned and/or handled by the competitor.
- *Dismissal from the Ring*—determined by the judge based on the rules of performance, and/or for matters related to competitor misconduct. This may be accompanied by a courtesy warning, reprimand, or written complaint.
- *Expulsion from the Event*—determined by the Organizing Committee or DAC. This results from a disciplinary hearing held in response to a written complaint or two reprimands. Expulsion shall be for all days of the event, including prior and future days when a multi-day event is being held. Upon expulsion from an event due to dog aggression or a dog out of control, all scores earned in that trial shall be canceled and all awards forfeited. Where expulsion is the result of an act of the handler, all scores earned in all previous trials conducted as part of the event shall be canceled and all awards forfeited.
- *Suspension, Fines, and Other Sanctions* – issued by WCRL.

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<sup>1</sup> Any notices by WCRL not rendered within the regulations-stipulated time period shall not be invalidated simply due to the time lapse, but the timeline is extended accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> Occasion may arise where grounds for complaint are discovered following the event. Deadlines may be extended at the sole discretion of WCRL.