



## CONFLICT AND AVOIDANCE POLICY

### Introduction

The following guidelines are part of our on-going Risk Management Assessment Policy for club members regarding dog to dog conflicts; how to minimise them as well as how to deal with a conflict should it arise.

Dogs have personalities: some simply do not like each other. If this is so, keep them away from each other. Dogs will also have the odd growl and minor tiff (usually mouth focussed). *Please don't panic*, very seldom is any damage done in such a scuffle. There is a lot of noise, and then it is over.

Always carry your lead with you, when you are working with your dog; in your pocket, around your neck or waist (not in your hand as this may give your dog confused signals). As soon as you have finished an exercise, clip your dog back on lead. The only other time dogs are free to run off lead is when all equipment is packed away, and classes are over. Then it's the owners' responsibility to watch their dog; remember there may still be other dogs around, on/off lead, which may not take kindly to your dog approaching.

### Avoiding Conflict: Early Warning Signs

Dogs rarely just lunge at one another. Become aware of your dogs warning signals; e.g. stiff body, soft growls, or staring at another dog, ears back, hackles up, muttering quietly. Aggression may be due to either fear or dominance.

Intervene, if you notice any of these behaviours. Move the dog away and ask for a behaviour to re-focus its attention. Whilst standing around between sessions, or listening to your instructor, keep your dog close by your side and be aware of what your dog is doing. Has it wandered off, started eyeballing or threatening another dog? In-between sessions is an ideal time for a little basic obedience... an opportunity to reinforce a stay, a drop etc with distractions all around. There are now permanent crates available at the field, so if there is one free perhaps think about putting your dog in one of these when it is not working or when you are otherwise occupied.

### Conflict: How to Manage It

In the event of a minor scuffle between dogs, both dogs need to learn that such behaviour is unacceptable. Physically separate the dogs and totally ignore them for a few minutes. (or give a gruff growl to indicate displeasure then ignore them). Then ask for a simple behaviour, and click and reward (eg a sit or a drop). Remember that you are rewarding the final good behaviour, not the scuffle. This is over and done with in the dogs mind.

In the event of a more heated clash with one or more dogs off lead we would like to implement the following:

1. **As frightening as the clash may seem to you, DO NOT scream and shout.** This can signal to the dog that it is doing the correct thing.
2. **Keep other dogs away.** If you choose to help other members whose dogs are having a dispute, hand your dog to someone else, before trying to aid in the conflict.
3. **To separate the dogs;** grab a back leg of the dog (s) that is off lead, or its tail to unbalance the dog; lift off the ground... and keep moving backwards. The dog on lead must be moved away backwards from the conflict as well.
4. Separated from its conceived threat, and in a new undignified position **the dog(s) should simmer down**, and be able to be clipped on lead... or held by the collar.
5. Move right away from the conflict zone, (you may give a gruff growl to indicate the behaviour is incorrect), face the dog away from the equipment and people and ignore it. After a few minutes ask for a simple behaviour, and click and reward. This applies to all the dogs involved, **regardless of who starts the conflict**

### Maintainance

Most importantly remember we are here for fun. Don't ostracise the owner of the dog who may have had the odd scuffle. If we are all aware of and implement the above policies, our club should remain the friendly place it is where like-minded people can gather and have some fun with their dogs.

There is an immense amount that can be learned on dog behaviour. Consult our club library, speak to one of the instructors... or better still buy a book not in the library... read it and then donate it to the club so others may benefit. Our library operates on a gold coin donation; the monies can then be used for the purchase of further books.

Finally remember YOUR dog is YOUR responsibility; you must know how to act. You cannot simply rely on there always being someone there to assist. If you are unsure on how to control your dog... ask now before it is too late. Remember that it is perfectly okay to ask other members to keep their dogs away from your dog, as your dog likes its own personal space. – this applies equally to both dominant and fearful dogs. This way you are maximising both your and your dogs' chances of having a successful and fun training session.