

Advice to registered societies on ways to manage conduct issues at KC licensed events

Resolve on the day; Report to the Kennel Club; Refusal of future entry to society events

We would like to take this opportunity to remind registered societies of the penalties at their disposal in the event that they are faced with conduct issues at their events. The recently announced yellow/red card system which the Kennel Club has added to the existing Kennel Club escalation process has prompted questions about the measures that societies themselves can take.

Whilst the yellow/red card system is only for Kennel Club use, societies can refuse entries and record incidents for referral to the Kennel Club.

Both processes are summarised below:

1. Refusal of Entry

Kennel Club Regulations for all disciplines allow the society concerned to review poor conduct by a participant and, by way of a warning and to protect their events, to refuse entries from an exhibitor/competitor for a set period of time. A written communication to the individual should state that the committee has agreed to refuse entries for XX months/years.

This should be a decision taken by the committee of the society, with some reasoning recorded in the minutes, but which is not detail that should be passed on to the person(s) concerned. The committee of a registered society has a right to protect its events, to maintain a safe, welcoming and happy environment for all. Refusal of entry is a practical and immediate option open to all registered societies. There is further guidance on the exercise of the refusal of entry available on request (for enquiries about the process please email breedshows@thekennelclub.org.uk)

2. Incident Book

A decision to refuse entry may have stemmed from an incident at a licensed event, and we therefore offer the following reminder about effective use of the incident book. All licensed events must have an incident book available and the process for its use is set out on the following link: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/incidents-at-events>

There are several key things to remember in this process. A report made in the book should be clearly documented and include full contact information for the parties involved, witnesses and particularly if a handler is involved (and as such contact details may not be otherwise available). Without the contact details this can slow down and delay the progress of a matter in trying to locate relevant parties and witnesses.

If the incident is to be escalated to the Kennel Club, it should be submitted as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the society to log any incident – even if at the time those involved indicate that they do not wish to take action.

It should also be noted that the tick box which says 'resolved on the day' should only be ticked if there is no further action required by any party.

Further information on the yellow/red card system

The information on the way in which the yellow/red card system operates is available on the following link: [Conduct Complaints Yellow/Red card | The Kennel Club](#)

The system is similar to the refusal of entries by a society, except that the issue of a red card means that an exhibitor may not enter any Kennel Club licensed event for a set time.

The yellow/red card system adds to the already existing penalties available under Kennel Club Regulations, to give additional support to warnings, and to present a much sharper 'deterrent' value for conduct issues relating to participation at a particular licensed event (but may include pre or post event activity). It is hoped that it will reassure everyone that the Kennel Club is taking action to address unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour in the context of licensed events and associated social media activity.

Clarification of the application of yellow/red card for social media and Kennel Club licensed events

The Kennel Club has introduced the yellow/red card measure to address inappropriate conduct at Kennel Club licensed events including complaints about social media activity relating to or associated with a Kennel Club licensed event. The purpose of the measure is to address any conduct by a participant at a licensed event or social media activity related to such event (whether pre, during or post such event). Individuals should report any issues to the Kennel Club or to the club or society on the day of an event for onward reporting to the Kennel Club via the incident book.

This measure is effective for issues arising from 1 November 2023.

A breach of a Kennel Club conduct regulation/Code of Conduct may still attract other penalties such as fines or, for more serious cases, under Rule A11 where there are options to disqualify individuals.

In line with the escalation policy, in cases of prolific, habitual and extreme content and activity on social media, then the matter may be escalated to a Rule A11 for consideration by the Disciplinary Committee. Serial and habitual content of an inappropriate nature may attract the more serious sanctions under the Rule A11 disciplinary process. For judges, it remains that a complaint about inappropriate social media engagement may also still be made by reference to the Code of Best Practice for Judges.

Relevant factors determining the level of response to social media content will include:

- The extreme nature of language used
- Threatening, bullying, discriminatory or intimidating language
- The tone and tenor of the posting
- Whether the social media engagement was a one-off aberration or prolific (habitual) activity
- Impact on an individual

- Impact on Kennel Club licensed events
- Whether the posting acted as a catalyst for a damaging momentum and traction and any further engagement
- Whether there is genuine remorse, contrition and direct apology offered

It is not intended to censor personal opinion being expressed but, in some cases, there will be little excuse or mitigation if specific comments are very clearly beyond the threshold of reasonable, mindful and respectful engagement. It is acceptable for opinion, criticism or disagreement or indeed disappointment to be expressed openly but it should be done in a reasonable and respectful manner.

A review of social media content in the context of licensed events is not intended to provide a personal and individual remedy; it is not akin to and is not a substitute for a complaint of defamation which an individual may be entitled to pursue as a result of comments made about them. Defamation is not a basis for a complaint in this context. Identification or specific references to an individual(s) is not required.

The concern is that social media does provide a platform for constructive discussion, but it is very easy for such discussion to degenerate into inappropriate comments which will cause hurt and distress. This may be inadvertent and social media sometimes acts like an 'echo chamber', allowing for momentum and traction – and which magnifies the impact if there is wide scale sharing and engagement. Care is therefore needed if private and personal opinions are to be made public. It is especially important not to deliberately or inadvertently be the catalyst for a conversation and allow others to build up a momentum of online comment.

A very different environment in terms of personal engagement both at licensed events and on social media is expected and anyone crossing the threshold of reasonable and respectful engagement is going to be captured by the new measures. The Kennel Club Board and the Disciplinary Committee are very serious and committed to this outcome. Everyone can play their part in this by tempering their own social media engagement and leading by example.

The Kennel Club Code of Conduct

Conduct - participants have a duty both to their dogs and to others to make licensed events friendly and welcoming and are expected to be co-operative and above all to create a safe environment, so all can enjoy their time at licensed events.

Sportsmanship - participants should conduct themselves at all times in an appropriate fashion and should display good manners and respect towards other participants, show officials and to the judges.

Where any participant criticises licensed events, show/event organisers and judges, other exhibitors or their dogs in inappropriate, hurtful or excessive ways on social media this will be reviewed under the conduct regulation for the respective licensed canine activity and in particular the use of the yellow/red card measures where appropriate.