**Wessex Canicross - Beginners Guide**

**Key contacts**

Sarah Elliott – Chair

Rupert Kirby – Vice Chair / Secretary

Ben Symons – Treasurer / Membership

Louise Kirby-Garton – Events & Challenges co-ordinator

Sarah Ward – Run co-ordinator

Emily Wollacott – Beginner’s co-ordinator

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We run in the beautiful countryside around Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset borders and wish to continue to do so. Please respect other users of the area; a smile and a thank you go a long way.

Cross Country running is typically on uneven, wet, muddy, with tree roots, slippery, sandy ground. You accept this when you come out running. Trail shoes are highly recommended!

**DOG**

It’s recommended that you dog is one year old before you participate in our runs and canicross in general. We recognise that this will vary on a dog by dog basis as dogs mature at different speeds. For the younger dogs it takes a while to build up to the longer runs. Most competitions stipulate a year for 5km routes and 18 months for the longer 10k and above. We like to encourage people to start running and having fun with their dogs but the dog’s welfare comes first. We therefore may well suggest you let your dog mature further before starting.

Please give other dogs plenty of space, especially at the start of runs, as some dogs gets very excited. When running please give warning(s) if you are going to pass people "coming through left, coming through right" is the expected call. When runners stop to regroup, please make sure you keep to yourself and be aware than not all dogs may react in the same way as yours. Remember they are still about 1m away from you when attached by a line.

Don't feed your dog right before or right after intense exercise. This may predispose the dog's stomach to bloat or twist, especially for large breed or deep-chested dogs. A general rule of thumb is to feed dogs at least one hour before or after exercising, ideally at least 2-3 hours before.

If your dog has any issues let us know before, it is better to let everyone know how a dog reacts to others rather than having a situation.

Some of the areas in which we run have a stick and flick policy, but if your dog does his/her business in areas where people walk please pick up, this is part of being a responsible canicross runner.

The commands used to control your dog are entirely your choice, just be consistent. Even if you are following, using the commands when you turn helps the dog understand for when they are out front. Many use left right, steady. You will hear people using gee and haw (mushers terms for directions). Use whatever is comfortable and makes sense to you.

The welfare of the dog is a high priority, if at any stage you or another runner is concerned, please stop and listen to what is being said.

**YOU**

On the runs, it is about fun, enjoying each other’s company; these are training runs, not races. We regroup often during runs especially on direction changes. If you are out of energy say so when we regroup and we’ll sort something out. If you are going to overtake let the person in front know and respect their response, overtaking downhill can cause people to lose their balance so please avoid.

If we meet a horse out we give them space and pull over as to not spook the horse.

Not all walkers are aware of what is going on around them, so give polite notice if catching up from behind. We cannot insist that other dogs are put on leads when we pass and most of the time this isn’t necessary. If there is a dog running off-lead around you and causing an issue, politely ask for them to be put on a lead. If this doesn’t happen, patiently wait for an opportunity to safely pass; you won’t get left behind.

We use Facebook to arrange training runs, please accept the invite or comment on the arrangement if you plan to attend as it gives the run leader numbers.

**EQUIPMENT**

The club will loan equipment to try so you can buy something that suits you and your dog. When borrowing club equipment use the time to assess which belt suits you and which harness your dog prefers. We will help and advise you in what you and your dog require to get going. Please ensure you return any loan equipment post run.

**Some Suppliers of Canicross equipment (there are others).**

If you require a specific type of belt or harness you have tried we can normally tell you which suppliers stock them.

http://www.kisi.co.uk

http://www.nonstopdogwearuk.co.uk

http://www.k9trailtime.com

http://www.innerwolf.co.uk

http://www.snowpawstore.com

http://www.bonzosworldofdogs.co.uk

http://www.culpeppers.co.uk