

March 5, 2007

Dear 4-H Dog Obedience Participant:

Congratulations! You and your dog are embarking upon a great adventure this year. You will be teaching your dog how to behave and cooperate with you as well as learning how to understand and communicate with your dog. In the process, we hope you will both develop a higher esteem for the other as you spend time together learning how to work as a team.

Please read this introductory letter in its entirety. It contains valuable information and answers to our most frequently asked questions.

EQUIPMENT:

There are two very important training tools that you must have before you can begin obedience training your dog. They are:

- 1) A slip-chain collar (commonly referred to as a choker-chain) that fits the dog's neck comfortably. This means that the collar is neither too loose nor too tight. Usually an inch and one-half of slack in the collar is just right. If given the choice between a medium-link and a small-link collar, choose the medium link. It is kinder to the dog.
- 2) A six-foot leather leash sized appropriately for your dog. The lead should be neither too wide for your small dog nor too thin for your large breed. We highly recommend leather over nylon leashes because leather is kinder to your hand. There will be times when you will have to give your dog a correction (snap the slip-collar using your leash) and a leather leash will not cut into your hand the way a nylon leash often does. Absolutely no chain leads, ropes or harnesses will be allowed. Please make sure the lead is six feet long. Many pet stores carry a four-foot leash which looks like it would be long enough to train with; however, on the sit-stay or down-stay exercises, you will be required to stand six feet away from your dog. Buying a six-foot leather leash at the beginning will save you time and money in the long run.

These are the only two equipment requirements for dog obedience training. Please have your dog outfitted with both of these items before training classes begin. You will not be allowed to train if your dog does not have the proper equipment or if the equipment is not properly sized for the dog.

PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS:

We must have a current 4-H Vaccination Certificate on file for your dog prior to your first training class as well as a completed and signed 4-H Dog Project Registration Form including the release form. You will not be allowed to train until both forms have been received. The 4-H Vaccination Certificate Proof of Vaccination is the only form we will be accepting as proof of your dog's vaccinations. We will not be accepting the rabies certificate from your vet, so please be sure you get the proper form and have it completed by your veterinarian. A 2007 Vaccination Form and a Dog Registration form are included with this letter. If you need additional copies, they are available at the 4-H Extension Office. If your dog is current on all of his/her vaccinations now but will be due for booster shots between now and County or State Fair, you will need to have your veterinarian fill out a 4-H Vaccination Certificate now (if we do not already have one on file) and another one after the booster vaccinations have been given. This requirement is for your dog's protection. Even healthy-looking dogs can carry disease if they are not vaccinated. We want to make sure you enjoy your training experience by keeping your dog healthy.

Although not required by 4-H, we also **STRONGLY** recommend you have your dog checked for heartworm and use heartworm preventative during the warm months of the year. The incidence of heartworm infection in Hendricks County is soaring and although treatable, heartworm infection is very expensive to cure and **FATAL** if left untreated. Prevention is definitely the best policy. As an added benefit, most heartworm preventatives also contain medications to eliminate other species of worms.

Additionally, you will need to obtain a Dog Obedience Project Book. You can purchase books from the Extension Office. The books will cost \$5.00 each and can often be used for up to three years of the project. You will be required to complete seven projects in your book prior to the County Fair. The pages are not difficult and usually all seven can be completed in a day or two. Completing seven projects in this book is a mandatory requirement for completing your Dog Obedience Project. Your completed project book is due by July 6, 2007. It is your responsibility to complete your book and have it ready to be turned in by the due date. LEADERS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR INCOMPLETE PROJECT WHEN 4-H MEMBER FAILS TO TURN IN BOOK BY JULY 6, 2007!! (If your only 4-H club is Hendricks Happy Heelers, your other project books can be signed by the 4-H Dog Leader. These books are due by July 6, 2007.) We advise that you obtain the Dog Obedience Project Book early and get it out of the way as quickly as possible. Once you have completed your book, please bring it to class. After taking the book home to review your work, one of the leaders will sign it and record that you have completed your book requirement for 2007. Your book will be returned to you at the County Fair.

First year dog obedience participants will also be required to complete a "Dog Record Sheet". This sheet is to be filled out as you progress in your dog training classes. This sheet must be signed by a leader at the beginning of the project, in the middle (around mid-June) and at the end (July). You are responsible for keeping track of your dog's expenses on the Dog Record Sheet throughout the training season and having those expenses recorded when you present your sheet for the second and third signatures.

PARENT PARTICIPATION:

We need parent volunteers to help with some of the paperwork details at the dog training meetings such as taking attendance, collecting paperwork, etc. No previous experience necessary. Your help will enable the dog obedience leaders to devote more class time to instructing 4-H'ers rather than organizing paperwork. In advance, we thank you for your assistance.

OBEDIENCE TRAINING SCHEDULE:

We require that first year dog obedience participants be registered with the Extension Office by April 15, 2007 in order to attend obedience training classes with their dog. First year 4-H members that sign up after April 15 will be allowed to attend classes without their dog, complete a 4-H Dog Obedience Project book and may assist, if desired, at the Fun Match and/or at the County Fair.

Obedience training classes are scheduled to begin the week of March 12, 2007. Beginning obedience will meet on Monday nights from 5:30pm to 6:30pm and from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. We hold two classes to help with overcrowding and allow the instructors to give more individual attention to class members. If you are in beginning obedience, you will be assigned one of the two times. Please do not plan to attend both classes to get "extra" practice. You will only be allowed one training class per week. When assigning class time, we will try to accommodate scheduling conflicts, preferences, etc; however, we cannot guarantee that you will be assigned to your preferred time.

Showmanship classes will meet on Mondays from 7:30pm to 8:00pm approximately one month after obedience classes have begun. We will announce when these are beginning. Advanced Obedience (2nd year and above) will meet on Mondays from 8:00pm to 9:00pm.

We meet at the Hendricks County 4-H Fairgrounds & Conference Center. Check the website www.geocities.com/hcdogclub/index.html for training location on the fairgrounds. Once training classes begin, we will meet every week (with the exception of holidays) until the Indiana State Fair. We STRONGLY encourage you to attend class each week through the County Fair. We understand that other obligations will sometimes interfere, but frequent absence is detrimental to the training process.

We require that all 4-H dog trainers wear comfortable, appropriate clothing when attending class. 4-H dog trainers that are wearing clothing that is determined to be immodest, overly restrictive, or distracting will be dismissed from class.

Most importantly, we require closed-toe, flat shoes with non-skid soles (tennis shoes are ideal). Absolutely no open-toed sandals, flip-flops, or heels are to be worn. We WILL NOT allow you to train if you are wearing inappropriate footwear. If you are wearing something other than tennis shoes, be aware that the dog obedience leaders will have to make a determination as to whether your footwear is appropriate and their decision is final. If your footwear is deemed inappropriate, you may watch the lesson from the bleachers but you won't be able to participate in that week's training class.

You should also be aware that weather sometimes affects our training schedule since our facility is not fully enclosed. If the outside temperature is less than 40 degrees at the time of the training class or in the

case of threatening weather (thunderstorms, lightening, tornadoes, etc.) we will automatically cancel dog training. Parents, please plan on staying while your child is participating in training class. Your observations will be an invaluable aid when he or she is practicing the new lessons at home. We understand that occasionally a parent will need to leave the premises during a lesson. We ask that these occasions be kept to an absolute minimum and that parents be prepared to pick up their 4-H'er and their dog immediately should threatening weather develop during a training session. Please help us ensure your child's safety. Every effort will be made to contact 4-H'ers prior to the night of training if it becomes necessary to cancel training class for that week. Please make sure that we have a current phone number on file to facilitate that process. If your phone number changes during the year, PLEASE LET US KNOW!! E-mail addresses are very useful for sharing information about upcoming matches and dog events. Please share your address if you would like to be updated on events.

Please plan on arriving 10 to 15 minutes prior to your regular training time so that you can exercise your dog before coming into the arena. Most dogs upon entering a new area will make their territory by relieving themselves due to their innate "pack" mentality. Each of these scent marks is extremely distracting to other passing dogs that will be more interested in covering the marks with their own scent than in learning the training lesson. We want to avoid this in the arena if at all possible; however, sometimes despite our best efforts, accidents do happen. In those instances, we have a shovel and a wheelbarrow that you should use to pick up your dog's waste. A volunteer will hold your dog while you dispose of it properly. All 4-H dog trainers are responsible for picking up after their dog. This includes both the arena and surrounding fairgrounds. Should your dog relieve himself on a post inside the arena, we will provide a spray bottle of ammonia and water for you to spray over your dog's "mark" to help minimize the scent distraction.

While we appreciate and encourage camaraderie between our 4-H dog trainers, please remember that class time is not an appropriate time for "chatting up" your friends. Excessive talking is distracting to other trainers and discourteous to your instructors. 4-H dog trainers who persist in such behavior will be dismissed from class. Spectators should refrain from engaging in distracting and/or dangerous behaviors such as loud talking, shouting, running or other forms of horseplay. If a spectator is deemed to be overly distracting, he or she will be asked to leave. No spectator will be allowed into the training area without prior permission from the instructors nor will they be allowed to give "sideline" instructions during class time to any participating 4-H dog trainer. Any spectator who persists in such behavior will be asked to leave.

OTHER TRAINING CLASSES:

If you are interested in participating in showmanship this year or are just curious as to what showmanship is all about, please plan to attend the class. Showmanship is a voluntary event. You do not have to attend showmanship class to attend obedience training; however, you must attend obedience training to enter showmanship.

Showmanship is very different from obedience. Sometimes it turns out that the dog that isn't a stellar obedience performer really shines in the showmanship ring. We encourage everyone to at least give showmanship a try. It will require slightly different equipment than obedience training; however, this equipment isn't expensive (less than \$10 in most cases). We will help you determine the proper showmanship lead and collar for your breed (or the predominate breed in your mixed breed) and give you direction as to where you can obtain that equipment. If you tried showmanship last year, we hope you'll participate again this year.

We will be having agility classes again this year thanks to the dedication and hard work of some of our parent volunteers. Agility is a fast-paced, fun activity for you and your dog. It isn't all play; however, and you will be required to attend training classes and show proficiency on all pieces of equipment before you will be allowed to compete at County Fair or State Fair. As with showmanship, agility is voluntary but you MUST have already completed 1-A or 1-B with your dog and be actively competing in obedience this year before you can participate in agility. We will provide more details regarding agility training sessions at the orientation session.

AGGRESSIVE DOG BEHAVIOR:

Aggressive dog behaviors (growling/snapping/lunging, etc. towards people and/or other dogs) will not be tolerated. If a 4-H member's dog displays any aggressive behaviors, the dog will be immediately excused from class and depending on the severity of the incident, may be barred from attending future classes. The dog obedience leaders are responsible for determining the severity of the aggressive behavior and will make the final decision as to the appropriate consequence.

CANINE VISITORS:

In the past, we have allowed family members of 4-H dog trainers to bring other family dogs to the arena for socialization. We will continue to allow this provided the following conditions have been met: 1) a completed and signed 4-H Vaccination Form must be on file; 2) no canine visitors will be allowed in the arena for the first eight weeks of beginning obedience classes; 3) the visiting dog must remain quietly seated next to a family member during the entire visit so as not to be overly distracting to the dogs that are training; 4) should a visiting dog relieve itself in the arena or on the surrounding fairgrounds, its handler will be expected to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Other species of animals (cats, rabbits, horses, pigs, etc) WILL NOT be allowed to visit at any time during the training classes.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

We will be having a Fun Match (practice dog show) on Saturday, June 30, 2007. We will need volunteers for all phases of this event. No previous experience is necessary. A willingness to help is all that is required. The proceeds from this Fun Match will be used to help pay for special awards at the County Fair and/or purchase training equipment. It will also provide valuable ring experience for 4-H members and their dogs prior to the County Fair.

STATE FAIR ENTRIES:

For those of you who have participated in the State Fair Dog Show in the past, please be aware that there have been some changes in the entry procedure. The rules have been slightly relaxed regarding pre-entry, although pre-entry is still the preferred method of registration. Pre-entries have helped make the registration process more efficient. The pre-entry deadline is July 1, 2007 (non-metered mail) and the fee is \$15 per 4-H exhibitor. Entries received from July 2, 2007 through July 31, 2007 will be charged \$50 per 4-H exhibitor/project. Entries received on August 1 thru check-in, 2007 must be hand delivered and will be charged \$50 per 4-H exhibitor/project PLUS \$50 per dog. As you can see, it pays to enter early.

The State Fair Dog Show is a two-day event. Obedience and Drill Team will compete on Friday, August 3, 2007. Showmanship and Agility will complete on Saturday, August 4, 2007.

Speaking of State Fair, we hope that ALL of our Happy Heelers will participate. You don't have to be a county winner to participate at State Fair. The real fun of State Fair doesn't come from winning a trophy or a piece of ribbon but comes instead from the camaraderie and goodwill fostered between club participants. We hope that you will mark your calendars and plan to attend.

T-SHIRTS:

Hendricks Happy Heelers has a wonderful 4-H member-designed logo that we use for our club member's t-shirts. If you are new to the dog club this year (or you've outgrown last year's shirt or you're training a different dog this year) t-shirts can be ordered through April 30, 2007. The t-shirts are \$15 each and must be pre-paid. Because each shirt will have your name and your dog's name incorporated into the logo, we must have both names CLEARLY PRINTED on the order form. The t-shirt vendor will be using this form to print your shirt, so please make sure that it can be easily read. We are not responsible if your shirt order is not received by April 30, 2007.

Again, we welcome you to the exciting world of dog obedience training. With just a little time, effort, and willing attitude, not only will you help your dog become a well-mannered pet, but you will also have a lot of fun in the process.

Happy Heeling!

Scott Foster

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PS: If you would like to learn more than our weekly one-hour class can provide (and we hope you do!), we encourage you to go to your local library or bookstore and pick up some reading material on dog behavior and/or dog training. A few titles that we recommend are: *Beyond Basic Dog Training* by Diane

Bauman; *Owner's Guide to Better Behavior in Dogs and Cats* by William E. Campbell; and *Don't Shoot the Dog! The New Art of Teaching and Training* by Karen Pryor.