



### Guidelines for Run Leaders and Guides

*Run group leaders are the life-blood of our club. Without you, it would be impossible for this club to do what we do - regular, consistent, reliable runs at multiple levels every Saturday (and most Wednesdays) during the season. This is the true heartbeat of our club and the reason we have grown to a turn out of 40-strong every Saturday morning run.*

We are a fun, busy and sociable club and we have a duty to make sure that everyone who runs with us has the best experience possible. As run leaders and club representatives, it is our job to keep everyone safe, help them to follow the rules and protect the image of the club and our privileged venue at Ashridge.

Below is some detailed guidance for Run Leaders, Guides and Back Markers in the hopes that you find it useful. Many of us have different run leading styles. Some like to lead from the front, some end up somewhere in the pack or near the back. The below guidance assumes you're using common sense but if anything is unclear, ask a committee member for clarity.

#### **Before the run:**

Make sure you know how many runners you have in your group. You could chat to them before hand and allocate a backmarker if you wish to.

If anyone on your run is unfamiliar to you, check that they know what your pace and distance is likely to be.

Check that everyone that has joined your run has signed up on facebook. We need to know who is out there for safety reasons. We will be asking all runners to sign up on facebook prior to the runs.

If someone has not signed up, ask them to leave your group and return next week having properly signed up. (If you are not comfortable to do this any committee member will do it for you if you ask them).

Sometimes runners may have signed up for a different group and decide to switch groups at the last minute, it's up to you if you will allow them to run with you. If you decide they may, tell a member of the committee you have picked up another runner so we know they're out there with you.

***Back markers:***

If you have chosen a back marker, ask them to commit to staying at the back throughout, and to let you know if they notice anyone struggling. If they are finding this difficult, they must ask you to re-allocate a new group member to be back marker. Back markers must not delegate this duty to someone else without their run leader's input.

***First aid:***

There are first aid kits to borrow in the club kit bag or you might have one of your own to carry. If you are comfortable to use them, feel free to take one with you on the run and return it afterwards. Let the person in charge of the kit know if you used anything so it can be topped up.

***Planning a route:***

Download the W3W app which is used by emergency services as well. Try to think about where the roads are for access should something happen. Plan the route to match the pace and distance you have volunteered for in the run poll. It would be unfair to ask someone who has signed up for a 5 miles to run 10 miles. They have chosen their run based on their and their dog's fitness.

On that same note - if it gets hot, or the turf is too soft and difficult, or the group just isn't doing well for whatever reason, shortening the route or slowing down is the best option. We're not out here looking for medals, we're out here to have some fun with our friends and four-legged-family.

***On Runs:***

This is also your run so your leading style is up to you. If you prefer to lead in front, communicate with your group not to go ahead of you. If you prefer to lead from behind, make sure the front runners know when to stop and wait for you.

We encourage good communication on runs. Feel free to shout to group members who run too far ahead, or take a wrong turn, or won't wait for the trailing runners. Shout to the group to get on one side if you meet other forest users, ask the group members to pass messages down the line LOUDLY so that everyone can work together as a team.

The paths are used by Families, Cyclists, Walkers, Runners and Riders.

If you meet oncoming forest users, ask your whole group to bring their dogs close, and shout what side you would like them to stand on - don't let the group split up and make a forest user and their dog or horse run the middle gauntlet. This is to allow safe passing.

When catching up other forest users, ask politely to pass, ensure you give the user space, and your dog cannot interfere with them.

If we meet a horse and rider, we need to give them space and pull over as to not spook the horse. Liaise with rider as to how they'd like you to proceed (waiting or passing while they wait). Pull dogs in close, do not run past the horse and do not start running again until your last runner has passed the horse.

Tell your group about canicross etiquette and the country-side code if you think they need a reminder.

Regroup often during runs especially on direction changes. When regrouping ask your runners to bring their dogs under close control, allow each dog its own space. Make sure that everyone has a chance to catch up, have a break and water their dogs if they need to. Do not start running until everyone is finished with their break.

Often the dogs and runners at the back are working the hardest, and some dogs won't drink if you race off the moment they catch up. For this reason, make sure nobody in your group starts moving until everyone in your group is ready.

Keep an eye on all the dogs and runners in your group. Check for signs of overheating especially, be ready to adjust your run. Walk, abort mission entirely, or split the group if you have to walk back with someone. If it gets hot, be sensible and make the decision for the entire group to walk back - err on the side of caution here.

If you're comfortable with it, you could ask members to run beside you briefly to check that their dog's harnesses fits well and that the dog is running comfortably while working. This is useful for new members trying kit but also for experienced members who's dogs may have developed or improved since starting.

### **Post Runs**

Remind your group to let their dogs cool down and drink.

Encourage members to download the app W3W as we might use this to specify start locations. It is also useful if an emergency arises.

Encourage members to upload their run photos. We all love to see the runs in action!

If you know anyone has borrowed kit, remind them to return it and remind new runners to sign up officially if they've run with us 3 times.

*A full set of rules and guidance you can share with your runners is in the files section on the Facebook group, and on our website at*

*<http://ashridgecanicrossers.org.uk/club-info/club-documentation/>*