

# Sled Dog Sports Association of Southern Ontario (SSASO) Code of Conduct (SSASO PROC001)

**Purpose:** to ensure a safe and positive environment at SSASO events/activities and on social media platforms.

Public perception is very important in a sport and lifestyle like mushing. In particular, other dog owning citizens are a large source of our strength and influence. The work and behaviours of our members, not just with dogs, but with other mushers and the public will affect how people will determine our reputation and thus impact upon our sport and community. They/We must be a positive ambassador of the sports.

Therefore, compliance with this Code of Conduct is a requirement for all members, participants, event attendees, spectators, stakeholder/sponsors and event organizers.

By joining SSASO or attending any of our events you agree to the following:

## **Dog husbandry:**

- Shall follow regional/municipal bylaws in regards to dog care and kennel standards as well as, if possible, the **Mush with PRIDE** Kennel and Dog Care standards and guidelines <http://www.mushwithpride.org/>
- With regard to kennel management and dog/team training, all currently and commonly accepted and established techniques and practices of training are acceptable. These include but are not limited to different humane techniques and practices described in published books, videos, community mentors and professional seminars.
- Participants and handlers will manage/control dog(s) and maintain equipment so the health and safety of themselves, others and dogs is not put at risk, nor other's equipment or property put at risk of being damaged.
- Any person who has been convicted of cruelty to dogs or inhumane treatment of animals will be denied membership. Any role held with SSASO will be terminated and given a lifetime ban.
- Dogs wearing yellow bandanas or ribbons are dogs in need of space. These dogs may be reactive in situations of excitement or stress. It is important for participants to respect the space of these dogs. The yellow bandana or ribbon is a working tool that must be used with full knowledge of the facts (not everyone around you may know the meaning of the yellow ribbon). In no situation does wearing a yellow bandana or ribbon release the owner from their responsibilities toward others.
- The participants are encouraged to have their dogs relieve themselves somewhere that is not disruptive to other trail users. If/When a dog relieves itself it is the responsibility of the owner to stop to pick up the excrement with bags that they carry with them.
- During competitions, participants should respect the organizers' instructions in relation to the behavior to be adopted if the dog relieves itself on the race

course during the race. Please be courteous and respect the trails we have been given authorization to use.

- No dog with bite history or concerning history of aggression shall be allowed to attend any event organized by SSASO.

### **Equipment used:**

It is important to use equipment specially designed and adapted for harness dog sports. Otherwise, the risk of injury increases. Here is the list of recommended equipment to ensure the best possible comfort of the musher as well as the dog when at work:

- Dog Harness: A harness whose attachment point is usually above the base of the tail. The harness must be properly fitted to the dog to avoid injury and / or discomfort and ensure the dog has adequate freedom of movement. In small dogs, it is possible to use a shorter harness whose attachment point is slightly behind the shoulders. This helps to avoid inadequate tension on the hips while providing more adequate clearance to the hind legs.
- Bungee line: A bungee line is an elasticized line of attachment which absorbs shock between the human and the dog associated with the pulling of the dog in harness. Bungee line is usually shorter for canicross to allow the runner to have control over dog when needed, and longer for wheeled classes to allow for enough room between the front wheel and the dog's tail.
- Canicross classes: Belt suitable for the runner: A belt with sub-thigh straps supported by the pelvis. A good belt should be fixed at the hips and not move while you are running. Pulling should be felt at the pelvis to allow the runner to run efficiently and not slow the dog down, which would cause discomfort for both teammates.
- Scooter, bikejoring and rig classes: the bike, scooter or rig should be equipped with brakes capable of safely stopping the team at any time.
- Helmet: a helmet is mandatory in all wheel classes: bikejoring, scooter, rig. Helmet is recommended for sled classes of 3+ dogs, but to the discretion of the musher. Helmet can be mandatory pending event venue requirements. Helmet is mandatory in all classes except canicross for minors.

### **Minimum Age of Dogs for Races:**

Minimum age are guidelines, it is expected that dogs have the ability to participate in a healthy safe manor. Younger dogs / yearling up to 2yrs and breeds that take longer to mature that do not appear to be ready to compete at a competitive event from a mental and/or physical stand point can be dismissed from the class/event by event organizer's, race marshall or race judge.

All disciplines :

- 2 km and under:10 months
- 2.1 km and over:12 months

Sanctioned races will defer to the sanctioning bodies age requirements eg IFSS/ISDRA

## **Personal conduct:**

- Shall conduct yourself in a positive manner to promote the sport and the mushing community, by prioritizing the welfare of your dog(s).
- Must be acting as steward for your dog(s).
- Demonstrate the principles of fair play, ethical conduct and respect. Cheating, misrepresentation, falsification of records, acting in an unsportsmanlike manner, bullying, committing acts of slander or libel, executing a personal vendetta, verbal and physical abuse of dogs, or others, will not be tolerated.
- Refrain from behavior that is defined by the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) as harassment or discrimination.
- Refrain from public criticism and creating, distributing or spreading false, misleading or malicious information about SSASO events, members, participants, volunteers, board members, or officials, through any means including social media, websites, printed or digital material or news outlets.
- Be familiar with and comply with SSASO event and site requirements, rules and regulations and the applicable event sanctioning body, e.g. International Federation of Sled Dog Sports (IFSS) or Canadian Association of Harness Dog Sports (CAHDS).
- All advertising must be honest and not in any way misrepresentative, fraudulent or misleading.
- The participant must practice respectful communication with other competitors, participants, volunteers, spectators, event attendees and organizers while engaged in harness dog sports activities, including but not limited to: social media, marketing, club discussion groups, and emails.
- Participants must respect the trails and/or venue we have been given authorization to use for any training, race, time trial, showcase, fun-run, workshop or any other event organized by SSASO. This includes but not limited to: no littering, pick up after your dog, keep dog in leash where leash requirements are in order, be courteous and respectful of other trail users

SSASO cannot be held responsible for individual acts of its members, participants, event attendees, spectators, or stakeholder/sponsors. That is why, as a community based club, we must each strive to maintain the highest standards of conduct.

SSASO is not government run, nor do we hold legal power and therefore have no legal jurisdiction or enforcement rights beyond the club/event.

## **Violations:**

Reporting alleged breaches to the Code of Conduct

- If anyone witnesses, reads or hears what they believe to be a breach of this code, they are to privately report it to a SSASO board member, the Race Marshall (or delegate) or members of the event organizing committee.
- At that point, the SSASO Misconduct Investigation Procedure will be invoked. Co-operation with SSASO board members or investigators on any reported violations may be required.

- Discipline for individuals may include but is not limited to: participation limitations, training programs, suspension or termination of membership and revocation of SSASO affiliation status.

**Updates to SSASO Code of Conduct:**

SSASO reserves the right to update this Code of Conduct from time to time as may be determined necessary or prudent at the discretion of the SSASO Board of Directors. Any such updates will be made public a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to their coming into effect and Members may provide comments and/or feedback during this time via the means of communication indicated in said publication.