

MARITIME ASSOCIATION OF HARNESS DOG SPORTS (“MAHDS”)



RULES & REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Last updated: March 2022

1 General Rules

1.1 Officials

- 1.1.1 **Event Official:** The “Event Official” or “Event Judge” is responsible for ensuring the event site is safe and that all MAHDS rules are respected and followed. The Event Official has exclusive jurisdiction at a sanctioned event.
- 1.1.2 **Safety Officer:** The “Safety Officer” is responsible for ensuring the safety of participants during sanctioned events. During an event, this individual reports to the event official. They wear a "security " bib.
- 1.1.3 For more details on their respective roles, refer to the document “*Rules & Regulations for Officials*”

1.2 Equipment

- 1.2.1 During a competitive class, all dogs must be equipped with a harness that is designed for harness dog sports and is fitted properly for the dog’s size, shape and weight. The harness must not restrict or hinder the dog’s range or motion while running and pulling or cause any physical harm to the dog.
- 1.2.2 At all times while actively participating, the bungee line must be attached directly to the back of the harness and not to the dog's collar.
- 1.2.3 Only flat collars may be worn during a sanctioned event.
- 1.2.4 The participant is responsible for ensuring that their equipment complies with these regulations. A gear verification station will be available on the event site. The Event Official and Event Organizer reserve the right to refuse any team the opportunity to participate if their equipment does not comply with the regulations. The participant is not entitled to and may not request reimbursement from the organizer in such circumstances.

- 1.2.5 The participant is not permitted to wear headphones while on the trail with their dog(s) at any sanctioned event.

1.3 Minimum Age of Dogs for Races

- 1.3.1 The following guidelines apply to all classes:
- 2 km and under: 10 months
 - 2 - 6 km: 12 months
 - 6 - 10 km: 15 months
 - 10+ km: 18 months

1.4 Decisions Regarding Dog's Ability to Participate

- 1.4.1 Any decision regarding the ability of a dog to participate in a sanctioned class or to finish a class safely is the responsibility of the Event Official and/or the Organizer. However, if the participant is able to present a valid certificate from a veterinarian indicating the dog's ability to participate in the class, it will take precedence over the Official's opinion.
- 1.4.2 **Visible Weakness:** A dog showing any sign of illness, infection or weakness (contagious or not) will be disqualified and may be required to leave the event site. The Event Organizer and the Event Official reserve the right to make all inquiries necessary to this determination.
- 1.4.3 **Dogs in Heat:** When she is not racing, a dog in heat must be kept in a secure space where she is not disturbing other dogs. A dog in heat may not be tied out unattended.

1.5 Penalty

- 1.5.1 Failure to comply with any provision under Article 1 without the participant having previously obtained an official exemption shall result in immediate disqualification of the team. In this case, the Event Official may prevent the team from starting a class or may request the team to leave the course before they finish the class.

2 Rules Concerning Start & Finish

2.1 Missed Starts

- 2.1.1 Participants must be on time for their start. A team that does not start at their scheduled time will not be permitted to start until the last registered team leaves, unless they are ready to start within the scheduled interval of the start schedule immediately after their scheduled start time, such that the next scheduled start is not delayed. The timer will start at the scheduled start time without change, whether the timing system is manual or chip.

2.2 Start Position

- 2.2.1 The nose of the dog(s) must remain behind the start line until the start timer indicates the team may start.

2.3 Finish Position

- 2.3.1 At the finish line, the nose of the dog is the marker for crossing the line (for example, when the nose of the dog crosses the finish line, the team's run is complete). The dog must cross the line ahead of their human teammate or the team will be disqualified from the class results.

3 Trail Rules

3.1 Teamwork

- 3.1.1 The spirit and purpose of harness dog sports requires the dog(s) and human to work together in partnership to form a team. This creates a harmony of movement and intention that allows both human and dog(s) to perform to the best of their combined abilities. This means the human teammate must always be working to assist their dog(s) and the dog(s) must willingly and easily run forward and ahead of their human teammate.
- 3.1.1 The dog must at all times be attached to their human teammate during the class.
- 3.1.2 The dog must never be overtaken or passed by their human teammate. Participants who overtake their dog at any time during the class will receive a 30 second time penalty (i.e. an additional 30 seconds will be added to their time for each infraction). Multiple reported infractions may result in disqualification.
- 3.1.3 Pulling the dog or forcing the dog to advance along the course by any means is strictly forbidden and may result in disqualification.
- 3.1.4 When participating in a class that involves driving more than one dog, each dog must be working in tandem. The participant must not allow any dog in the team to be pulled or dragged by their canine teammates. If this occurs at any time during the class, it will result in automatic disqualification.
- 3.1.5 The participant is not allowed to cross the finish line ahead of their dog.

3.2 Passing

- 3.2.1 **Definitions:** For the purpose of this section, the term "overtaking" means the team passing and "overtaken" means the team being passed.
- 3.2.2 **Bikejoring, Skijoring, Kicksled & Scooter**
In bikejoring, skijoring, kicksled and scooter, the overtaking team must announce itself by shouting "TRACK" or "TRAIL" so that the other team can hear it. They may also indicate the side on which they will pass (ex.: "TRAIL LEFT").

The team being overtaken must:

- Yield to the overtaking team, preferably staying to the right side of the trail. If the overtaking team does not specify on which side they will pass, the team being overtaken should simply remain straight behind their dog;
- Maintain their speed or slow down (they should not speed up);
- Maintain control over your dog. This may require the participant being passed to shorten their bungee, reeling their dog in close, or to step off the trail or stop;
- In skijoring, the participant being passed should keep skis and poles parallel to the trail;
- During a pass the overtaking team can ask the team being passed to slow down.

3.2.3 **Canicross and Canitrail**

In canicross and canitrail, the overtaking team can ask the team being overtaken to maintain a constant speed without accelerating. This is so the overtaking team can have the space and time necessary to advance safely. This rule does not apply to teams that start at the same time.

3.2.4 **Pass Delay Rule**

The newly overtaken participant must respect the request made by the overtaking team and keep a distance of at least two teams between them and the team in front. This rule does not apply for classes that start in waves or for teams that start at the same time.

Once the overtaking team has completed their pass, it will not be possible for the overtaken team to pass until they have gone a minimum of 300 meters from where the pass was completed or a minimum of 30 seconds has gone by, except with the authorization of the team that originally passed them and as long as the latter is advancing.

NOTE: This rule does not apply when the teams are less than 400 meters from the finish line, for classes with wave starts, or for canicross classes.

3.2.5 **Penalties**

Any infraction of the rules in Article 3.2 is punishable by a 30 second time penalty (i.e. an additional 30 seconds will be added to the participant's time for each infraction). Multiple reported infractions may result in disqualification. This is left to the discretion of the Event Official following a meeting with the offending participant and, if required, the complainant.

4 Sport-Specific Rules by Discipline

4.1 Bikejoring

4.1.1 This discipline is practiced with one or two dogs.

4.1.2 When the team is made up of two dogs, the dogs must be connected by a neckline.

4.1.3 The dog(s) must be permanently attached to the bike by a bungee line whose distance

between the front of the headset and the base of the tail of the dog is at most 2.45 meters when stretched without elongation. However, the recommended distance is 2.20 meters.

4.1.4 Wearing a helmet is mandatory for the cyclist.

4.1.5 The bike must be equipped with tires suitable for the terrain and must have brakes capable of immobilizing the team.

4.2 Fatbikejoring

4.2.1 This discipline is practiced with one or two dogs.

4.2.2 When the team is made up of two dogs, the dogs must be connected by a neckline.

4.2.3 The dog(s) must be permanently attached to the bike by a bungee line whose distance between the front of the headset and the base of the tail of the dog is at most 2.45 meters when stretched without elongation. However, the recommended distance is 2.20 meters.

4.2.4 Wearing a helmet is mandatory for the cyclist.

4.2.5 The bike must be equipped with mountain bike tires and must have brakes capable of immobilizing the team.

4.2.6 Tires cannot be studded with metal spikes.

4.2.7 The minimum tire width is 3.5" and the tire pressure must be less than 10 psi.

4.3 Canicross

4.3.1 This discipline is practiced with one dog.

4.3.2 The dog must be permanently attached to the participant's canicross belt via a bungee line whose distance between the participant's abdomen and the base of the dog's tail must be no more than 2 meters when stretched without elongation. However, the recommended distance is 1.70 meters.

4.3.3 Cleats and snowshoes may be permitted provided they are not dangerous to dogs and other participants. The event organizer will determine if these materials can be used and may decide their prohibition or any other adaptation at their discretion. The Event Official reserves the right to refuse the use of such equipment if they consider it dangerous.

4.4 Skijoring

4.4.1 This discipline is practiced with one or two dogs.

4.4.2 When the team is made up of two dogs, the dogs must be connected by a neckline.

- 4.4.3 The dog(s) must be permanently attached to the participant's belt via a bungee line whose distance from the participant's abdomen to the base of the dog's tail must be no more than 3 meters. However, the recommended distance is 2.75 meters.
- 4.4.4 Only cross-country skate skis are acceptable for use in this event.
- 4.4.5 Wearing a helmet is recommended.

4.5 Scooter

- 4.5.1 This discipline is practiced with one or two dogs.
- 4.5.2 When the team is made up of two dogs, the dogs must be connected by a neckline.
- 4.5.3 If the team consists of a single dog, the participant must ensure that his dog is fit enough to cover the distance and, if necessary, help him further.
- 4.5.4 The Organizer or Official may refuse the departure of a 1-dog team if they consider the trail unsuitable or too difficult.
- 4.5.5 The dog(s) must be permanently attached by a bungee line whose distance between the front of the headset and the base of the dog's tail is at most 2.45 meters when stretched without elongation. However, the recommended distance is 2.20 meters.
- 4.5.6 The scooter must not have a motor, must be equipped with mountain bike tires, and must have brakes powerful enough to immobilize the team.
- 4.5.7 Wearing a helmet is mandatory for the driver.

4.6 Kicksled

- 4.6.1 This discipline is practiced with one or two dogs.
- 4.6.2 When the team is made up of two dogs, the dogs must be connected by a neckline.
- 4.6.3 If the team consists of a single dog, the participant must ensure that their dog is fit enough to cover the distance and, if necessary, help their dog further.
- 4.6.4 The Organizer or Official may refuse the departure of a 1-dog team if they consider the trail unsuitable or too difficult.
- 4.6.5 The dog(s) are permanently attached by a bungee line whose distance from the front of the kicksled to the base of the dog's tail is at most 2.45 meters when stretched without elongation.
- 4.6.6 The kicksled must be equipped with a brake system or a rubber mat attached to the kicksled.
- 4.6.7 The runners of the kicksled must not have metal borders (edges of metal).

4.6.8 A helmet is mandatory for participants under 18 years of age and highly recommended for adults.

4.7 4-dog Sled

4.7.1 This discipline is practiced with four (4) dogs (three (3) dogs minimum).

4.7.2 The dogs must be connected by a neckline (at the center line for the wheel and connected together for the leaders).

4.7.3 At minimum, the sled must be equipped with:

- a brake system attached to the sled, and
- a snow anchor connected to the center line.

4.7.4 The runners of the sled must not have metal edges.

4.7.5 A helmet is mandatory for the driver.

5 Sportsmanship

5.1 General

5.1.1 Common sense and sportsmanship should prevail throughout the event. If the Event Official judges that the behavior of a participant or a dog is at any time detrimental to the sport or the event, the Official may disqualify a team from the class and/or require the team to leave the venue. In this case, registration for future events may be reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee.

5.2 Canine Behaviour

5.2.1 All participants are responsible for the behavior of their dog(s) at the event venue and on the trail.

5.2.1 **Biting:** In the case where a dog bites another participant or dog with or without provocation, the participant will not be able to participate with the dog in future MAHDS events for a duration, and with such conditions as may be imposed, determined by the Disciplinary Committee. The participant may be required to have the dog evaluated by a behavioral veterinarian or a canine educator and thus demonstrate that the animal does not pose a danger to humans and dogs. Following the completion of any conditions, the file will be reviewed by MAHDS and a determination as to whether or not the dog may participate in future MAHDS events will be made.

5.2.2 **Repeated Bad Behaviour:** In the event that a dog has accumulated multiple complaints regarding their behaviour during events sanctioned by MAHDS, the participant may receive a notice from the Disciplinary Committee advising of conditions or suspension related to their participation at future MAHDS events (for example, the participant may

be banned from participating in MAHDS events for a specified period of time or their membership may be revoked or suspended). In addition, the participant may be required to have the offending dog evaluated by a behavioral veterinarian or canine educator and demonstrate that the animal is safe for humans and dogs. Following the completion of any conditions, the file will be reviewed by MAHDS and a determination as to whether or not the dog may participate in future MAHDS events will be made.

5.3 Participant's Behaviour & Animal Welfare

5.3.1 **Dog's Well-being:** Each participant is responsible for the well-being of their dog(s) before, during and after the event class(es), under penalty of a warning by the Official.

5.3.2 **Off-leash Dogs:** Dogs are not allowed to run free on the event site.

5.3.3 **Mistreatment:** Abuse of dogs with or without an instrument is forbidden.

5.4 Code of Conduct

5.4.1 The participant undertakes to read and respect all of the provisions included in the document "*MAHDS Code of Conduct*".

5.5 Rule Infractions

5.5.1 Protests

Any behavior deemed harmful or unacceptable during an event must be reported to the Event Official by way of an official protest form, which will be completed by either the complainant or the Event Official.

The Event Official is entitled to complete an official protest if they witness an offense even if the prejudiced participant does not wish to do so.

Protests may be directed towards a participant, the organizer, a volunteer or the Event Official. In the latter case, the protest form should be submitted to the Chief Official.

The *Official Protest Form* is available on and may be submitted electronically via our website.

5.5.2 Protests Made on the Day of the Event

In order to file a protest regarding a breach of the rules, the griever must file their complaint with the Event Official on the day of the event, within one hour of the finish of the last participant in the class to which the complaint relates.

This may relate to a situation witnessed or experienced by the complainant. The complaint will fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Event Official, unless the complaint pertains to the Official, in which case the complaint will fall under the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Committee.

Any appeal of a decision rendered by the Event Official is heard in the first instance by the MAHDS Disciplinary Committee. A complainant can appeal the decision of the official within 7 days of the end of the event by submitting a second official protest form

requesting an appeal of the original decision. Where the complainant wishes to appeal the decision of the Disciplinary Committee regarding an initial complaint with respect to an Event Official, they may do so by submitting the second protest form to the MAHDS Board of Directors.

5.5.2 **Protests Made After the Event**

In order to file a protest after the completion of an event, the complainant must submit an official protest form within seven (7) days of the completion of the event.

5.5.3 **Protest Process:**

When the Event Official identifies a protest or a participant submits a protest, the Official performs the following steps:

- The Event Official contacts the complainant or prejudiced participant and completes the Official Protest Form or reviews the Official Protest Form submitted online via the MAHDS website.
- After collecting the information from the prejudiced participant, the Event Official contacts the participant accused of committing the offense (the subject of the complaint). The prejudiced participant must not be present during this conversation. The Official enters a description of the incident from the point of view of the participant who is the subject of the complaint on the Official Protest Form.
- If the description of the incident received from each participant is the same, the Official may now decide what action to take (for example, if the complaint is made at the event during which the incident took place, the Official can make a decision at the event). This decision is based on the seriousness of the incident and the degree of cooperation of the participant who is the subject of the complaint.
- If the description of the incident received from each participant is different, the Official may collect additional testimonies and evidence before making their decision. The Official has the discretion to make a decision using their own judgment, with regard to the information they have on hand, the seriousness of the incident and the degree of cooperation of the participant who is the subject of the complaint.
- The Official must take note of all actions taken regarding the incident (discussion, suspension, etc.).
- The completed form is then submitted to the Disciplinary Committee responsible for managing the file after the event. The Disciplinary Committee may contact the Event Official after the event to clarify certain information.

5.6 **Types of Offences**

5.6.1 There are two (2) types of rule infractions:

- **INCONSEQUENTIAL:** Refers to an offense that did not result in any psychological or physical injury to the participant or the participant's dog in this specific instance, but in other circumstances may have resulted in physical or psychological injury to the participant or the participant's dog.
- **CONSEQUENTIAL:** Refers to an offense that resulted in psychological or physical injury(ies) to participant or a participant's dog.

5.7 Repeated Offences

- 5.7.1 **Repeated Disqualification:** Any participant who, taking into account all classes the participant participates in, has been disqualified two (2) times during the same season for a violation of these rules is suspended from entry in the next two (2) events sanctioned by MAHDS. This suspension applies to all disciplines offered and is not limited to the current season.
- 5.7.2 **Repeated Unacceptable Behavior:** A repetition of one or more behaviors of a dog or human deemed unacceptable in the context of an event will be reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee.

6 Regional Circuit Categories and Disciplines

6.1 General

- 6.1.1 Please refer to the document "*Regional Circuit Regulations*".

7 Additional Information

7.1 Rules & Requirements for Race Organizers

- 7.1.1 For more information on the different classes offered by MAHDS, the course requirements, the rules concerning departures, regulations concerning temperatures, details of courses according to the discipline, the signs on the course and more, please refer to the document, "*Rules & Requirements for Race Organizers*".

8 Exemptions

8.1 Request for Exemption by a Participant

- 8.1.1 A request for an exemption from an article of the Rules for Participants must be made by the participant in writing to MAHDS no later than one week in advance of the event. The MAHDS board will then decide whether or not an exemption is warranted.
- 8.1.2 Neither an Event Organizer nor Event Official may provide exemptions to the *Rules & Requirements for Participants* without the prior approval of the MAHDS board.
- 8.1.3 MAHDS retains the right to grant exemptions at their discretion to participants for minor infractions of the *Rules & Requirements for Participants* at any time.