

The following information applies to ALL DSA troops:

### **Troop Policies**

With so many new troops forming all around the globe, DSA is offering some guidelines for new troops, to help you know what is expected and what troops can expect both from DSA and from your local troop membership. Because many troops have formed in far away areas without the benefit of having attended a Dog Scout Camp, or received one-on-one leadership training, we're hoping that the following information will be helpful.

#### **Requirements for becoming a member of a local troop:**

##### **DUES**

Your local members must be members of DSA. By making sure everyone is a part of the national organization, you will insure that they are kept in the stream of things, by receiving the newsletter, and being eligible for other member benefits. One of the benefits of membership is the DSA insurance, which covers members while they are participating in an organized DSA event. So, just like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, to participate, you must first join the parent organization, which provides all of the materials, training and guidance as your troop forms and grows.

An easy way to do this is to have membership forms available at your organizational meeting, and future troop meetings. There will also be a place on the web site where leaders can log on and view the current membership, to see if everyone on their rolls has signed on as a member of DSA.

Some troops offer a "grace period" before asking the people to pay DSA dues. For instance, they may be invited to attend two or three functions, to see if they think this is going to be something they're going to enjoy. However, most people have no problem in sending in their dues right away, when they find out what a great and worthwhile organization DSA is. They pay dues based on the fact that we're helping millions of dogs and their pet parents with their relationships, and they want to become fellow helpers. There are some people who consider themselves the "helpees," however, and they're constantly asking "What is Dog Scouts doing for ME?" The helpee types may actually grumble about paying any dues whatsoever. But the local troops wouldn't even be here without the hard work of the National Organization and its Certification Program, so I'm not sure how they think they should get around paying dues.

Dues and Junior Scouts: There is a special provision for troops that cater specifically to children. DSA was not started for children, but many people see the great value in the lessons that can be learned by the future responsible pet parents of the world. At this writing, there is only one troop in the US and one in

Canada in which they cater to children. Because some kids don't have the ability to pay the regular dues fees, we have made a special provision for these types of troops. Actually, the fees for DSA are very similarly structured to the Boy Scouts, and kids must pay those to participate in Boy Scout functions, purchase the handbooks for each badge, and otherwise exist as a troop. But, again, if you meet with reluctance or inability on the part of your young troop members to pay the membership fees, there is another option. For kid's troops, they just need one person to be the responsible party, or leader, and that person can pay the full dues fees. Each of the kids would then be considered at the "Additional Family Member" rate of \$5.00 per child, and would be included in the insurance plan. They would not, however, separately get the newsletter (the leader could reproduce additional copies, or otherwise share the information in each issue with the members at a troop meeting). They would not receive the other benefits of membership, like participation in the Backpacking Titling Program, Cadet Scout Program, Recognition Program, membership discounts on camp or other materials, unless they paid the individual member rate.

## **DOG SCOUT LAWS**

Members must also pledge to uphold the Dog Scout Laws. These are rather simple rules of good manners, helpfulness to others, looking out for your dog's welfare, becoming a role model for other dog owners, and obeying local ordinances.

Paying the National dues and following the DSA laws are the only two things that the National Organization requires of its local members. However, your local Troop may find it necessary to make additional requirements. Some of these are outlined below.

### **Local Dues (optional)**

If it is at all possible, it would be great if people did not have to be asked to pay local dues on top of the national dues. However, sometimes the Troop has expenses that need to be covered, like the production of its own web site, booth rental fees at local events, mailing a troop newsletter, rental of a building that is used for meetings, costs for printing advertising brochures and business cards, or other expenses. If you can't get the above things/work done or donated by a member or volunteer, and can't get monies through fundraising or getting a local company to sponsor or underwrite some of these costs, you might need to charge a small dues fee to cover troop expenses. Many troops function without the charging of additional dues, and this is one of the "bones of contention" where people don't understand the need to pay both National and Troop dues.

Local dues should be kept as low as possible to cover minimal expenses, and if any member of a local troop feels that they are asked to pay unusual amounts for local dues, they should contact the National Organization, which will investigate

to see if those dues are in line with the expenses incurred. The troop leader (or troop treasurer) should be able to show what money came in and where it was spent if there is an inquiry.

## **Liability Issues**

Some Troops have made prerequisites for membership in their local Troop that are for the purpose of safety and reducing liability. For example:

Spaying/Neutering – While DSA promotes the practice of spaying and neutering pet dogs it is definitely not a requirement for people to join the National Organization or the local troops. We have found at least one local troop, however, which found it prudent to make such a requirement, to avoid issues of aggression during troop meetings, which were always held at the person's house. If the troop in your area has such a prerequisite, and you do not think that this is fair, and can't see how the person involved felt it was necessary, you are more than welcome to start up a neighboring Dog Scout Troop which has no such requirements of its troop members.

Release Forms/Waivers – Many troops require its members to sign a waiver of liability at each function. This reminds people that they are responsible of their own dog's actions, and they are in charge of making sure that their own dog's environment is managed to prevent the dog doing harm to others or having harm done to him.

Training Prerequisite – The first class that people attend at dog scout camp covers how to handle your dog around other dogs, how to get his attention, how to orchestrate proper dog greetings, how to understand dog communication, and how to keep your dog out of trouble with this information. While learning these things is usually something you will do in the course of regular troop activities, some leaders may feel it prudent to make sure you have an understanding of these things before you attend an event where your dog will be mingling with other dogs. To assume that the average pet parent already knows these things is a risk that the leader may not want to take. If you feel that your leader is requiring too much in the way of training prior to allowing membership, you should contact the National Organization. We will investigate to make sure the requisite class(es) is to insure your own safety, and the safety of others, and not just a ploy to fill the leader's training classes and make money. We do not want to see trainers or training centers starting Dog Scout Troops to benefit their own business. Scouting is all about sharing information and educating pet parents, but if your leader happens to be a professional trainer, you should also not be joining the Dog Scout Troop only to take advantage of getting training for free or at a heavily discounted rate, for which you would otherwise have to pay.

Troop Policy Agreements – Some troops have actual policy statements, which the members have to read and agree to before attending group hikes or other

functions. For example, a particular troop has a rule that when on the trails, a dog scout team must “pull over,” perform a sit stay, and give the right of way to the hiker, dog walker, or biker that is approaching. It might further state that you are required to pick up your own dog’s poop, or even include picking up trash that you find along the way. There may even be a “no foul language” clause, or may require you to keep a copy of current vaccination records on file with the troop. For activities where you’re greeting the public, like an educational booth or volunteer bell-ringing, and one must keep a close watch on one’s dog at all times and manage the environment carefully, the troop may have a “one dog at a time per person” clause. While all of this is encouraged as a by-product of responsible pet parenting, some of the items may not be specific requirements of Dog Scouts of America. Your Troop, however, is within its rights to require various things of its members when participating as a group, to uphold the tenets of our organization, avoid liability, and to present a positive image of responsible pet parents and their well-behaved dogs. If you feel that your troop or leader is making undue or unnecessary requirements of you, please contact the National Organization, and we will investigate. Keep in mind that these restrictions or “codes” are put in place by your leader for the welfare of all concerned.

### **Other requisites**

### **NON-EXCLUSIVITY AND NAMES**

Dog Scouts of America prides itself on not discriminating against any particular breed, size, sex, pedigree, color or age of dog, nor the age, sex, or ethnic origin of the pet parent. Troops should likewise not discriminate or practice exclusivity. If, for example you want to start a troop for kids, you should also not disallow adults or families. Your troop could consist mostly of people from your local dog park, obedience class, church, flyball team, or yacht club, as long as it is not exclusively for just those people.

The name of your Troop should also not reflect the name of a training center, particular segment of society, person or entity. It is okay to use a geographical area as part of your troop name, for example the Cereal City Canines (from Battle Creek), or the Lone Star Paw Squad (from Texas), or the Northern Michigan Trailblazers (from Michigan). Names like “Boo-Boo’s Crew,” “Girls with Goldens,” “PetSmart Scouts,” or “The Trainer’s Academy Troop” would not be acceptable names. Also, we are not like a certain national dog club, which allows local dog clubs to have a “monopoly” in certain areas with a 200 mile radius, preventing any additional groups from starting up there. DSA sees a future with Dog Scout Troops in every community, and there could very well be two or more within the same city. For that reason, you may want to include an adjective with your troop name. For example, the “Delaware Doggie Do-rights” would be better than the “Delaware Dog Scouts.” This would allow another troop to form, calling themselves the “Delaware Dogs That Care,” or something like that. Contact the National Organization regarding your choice(s) for a name. Most troops go by

their troop number and familiar name, as in: “Dog Scout Troop 107 The Buckeye Blue Grass Brigade (BBGB’s).” This tells people that the troop is affiliated with DSA, and that it is located near the Ohio/Kentucky border.

### **Other Policies and Procedures**

Having run a flyball team for many years, I found that I needed to develop policy statements for everything from attendance to hygiene.

Yes, there are people who don’t realize that their dogs need to get groomed and bathed more regularly, and to avoid future embarrassment, you might want to state it right in your troop policies. At the very least, you should require members to bathe their dogs prior to any engagement like Therapy Dog Visitations, Public Education, School Reading Programs, or really ANYTHING where they need to come in contact with the public.

I had to detail how the flyball uniform should look and dictate (I’m such a meanie...) that they actually wash it and possibly press it between uses, instead of remembering that it was balled up behind the seat of the truck since the last flyball tournament, and pull it on as they’re driving into the parking lot of the venue... If your Troop members wish to look alike, or if you want them to have their dogs wear a troop bandana, their uniforms, or other stuff to events, you should state that in a policy before you get people objecting to these things. If anything about your troop requires “uniformity,” then you need to get that all spelled out (like wear black pants and white tennis shoes with your red DSA shirt for the parade).

Also with the flyball team, practicing was an important part of preparation for competitions, so I had an attendance policy. As for Dog Scout Troops, the only attendance I require is that they attend the in-service I give on “The Smart End of the Leash” before they try out for the Dog Scout Title. This information is something people have to know to get the DSA certification, and so when I offer it as a sort of “mini-seminar,” people try their best to attend the meeting, since their future as a Dog Scout team may depend on it. By the way, this information (titled “Dog Scout Class) can be found in the “learn new things” section of this website: [www.DogScoutTroop107.com](http://www.DogScoutTroop107.com)

Your troop may have some sort of preparatory meeting prior to undertaking bell-ringing, for example, and it might be very important for you to attend, so that the troop leader can see that you and your dog are ready to be thrust into the public, with kids petting and prodding your dog, loud noises all around, wearing Santa suits or other festive get-ups, and being asked to hold baskets or fetch dollar bills. Or, the leader may say that a particular activity is recommended only for dogs that have passed the Therapy Dog certification. This is a judgment call for your leader. If you feel that your leader is making undue or unjustified

requirements of you to participate in certain activities, and you don't understand the validity of these requirements, please contact the National Organization.

### **Clubhouse Fees**

There are some training organizations that charge a yearly fee for the use of their facility. For several hundred dollars, the members are allowed to partake of as much or as little training as they care to at the particular center or facility. Much like the health club member or time-share member sales, the owner of the facility is often counting on people not using the facility and letting the whole thing go by the wayside (so that more memberships can be sold than the building could actually accommodate at any one time).

If your troop becomes involved with one of these arrangements, I would hope that it was a last ditch choice. In other words, you are paying a fee to use a building or doggie day care center because that is the only place (or only safe place) that your membership can count on for regular meetings which will hold the entire membership in inclement weather, or whatever. If you can't get a local doggie daycare, veterinarian, or training center to donate the use of their center for troop meetings and such, you may be stuck in a "fee for services rendered" situation.

Rather than incorporate these fees into local troop dues, where people will be paying regardless of whether they are using the facility or not, I would suggest a pay-as-you-go system, where each person pays out of their pocket each time it is used. For example, I used to rent my training center out to other flyball teams to practice for \$25.00 per night. The teams would just collect \$3.00 per person to pay this fee. Some nights, they'd have more than 10 people, and the excess would go in their "kitty," for a night when possibly fewer people were in attendance. Having a central place where the troop can meet for things such as play days, video nights, dog parties, and other stuff is a great idea, though, and most people wouldn't complain about paying a few bucks per person per use to have a safe, dog-friendly facility for their use. If you feel that your troop is asking for too much money to cover such things, you may want to volunteer to look into alternate facilities, which could be used at no charge. If you think that the facility or person in charge of your troop is taking advantage of you to create revenue for themselves or someone else, please contact the National Organization for guidance.

### **Sponsorships**

To date, we have not had a person or business offer to "sponsor" a Dog Scout Troop. I used to see it in Flyball quite a lot. A company or store would pay for uniforms or flyball equipment in exchange for advertisement on the team's uniforms, flyball box, or even the team name. To do this would not be appropriate for a DSA Troop.

What we do with Dog Scouts is a good thing. We're not out for profit, or to win dog shows, or receive fame... We just want to have people love their dogs more, have an appreciation for the human/canine bond, and help spread responsible pet parenting. Many organizations would see where it would benefit THEM to align themselves with such a worthy organization, to show that they care about these issues affecting their communities by donating goods or services. But Dog Scouts is not in the business of promoting other organizations' brands of dog food, political stance, or other products in exchange for funding. If you can get an organization to donate goods, services or money to the troop, based on the good work that we do, then that is fine. We can not compromise the integrity of Dog Scouts of America, however, by accepting sponsorships which result in the need for us to do advertising or endorsement for another entity or product. If we do endorse something, it's because of the good of the product in promoting a better life for people and their dogs, and not because we received something in exchange for it.

### **Use of the Dog Scout Logo**

Many troops wish to use the DSA logo on their "stuff." Any and all use of the DSA logo must be approved by the National Organization. If you want to create a troop logo incorporating the DSA logo, or want to have stationery made up, or a banner for parades, or anything else that requires the use of the logo, we ask that you simply contact DSA first. The answer is usually yes, but we want to know what you're doing with it first. What you are NOT allowed to do with the DSA logo is to produce goods featuring the DSA logo which you will sell for a profit. We don't want troops producing the same goods that DSA has in Sparky's Boutique and Outfitters to sell, unless prior express permission is granted on a case-by-case basis.

Because we give you a one-time okay to do it in one case, does not mean that you'll be able to do it for an eternity. If you want to reproduce the DSA logo on troop jackets, or other attire, it is usually okay, as long as you don't charge more than the actual cost of the jacket. Please check to see if a logo use fee applies. We may actually let you produce something, but charge a logo use fee. Also, you will usually be granted permission to reproduce something that you give away for free. Remember to keep asking on a case-by-case basis. Just because you get an okay for one thing doesn't mean that it's okay to do other things with the logo without asking. If it's something that has not come up before, Board approval may be needed before giving permission

We hope this helps clarify the DSA position on various situations and gives you a solid guideline to use with your troop. If you have any questions, please contact the Certification Program Director: Chris Puls [DogScouts@hotmail.com](mailto:DogScouts@hotmail.com) and if needed, she can present the question/issue to the Board of Directors