



## SAFE HANDLING GUIDE

At your volunteering post, you may be required just to observe dogs with their owners, or you may be required to handle the dogs for their owners (some of the obstacles may not be suitable for some dogs). How you approach and handle the dogs will make a significant difference to their reactions towards you and others. We have put together this safe handling guide that we advise all our Muddy Dog Challenge volunteers take the time to read. We have also recorded dog training/health and safety videos which you can look at on our website <https://muddydog.battersea.org.uk/tips-training/#safety> that you will find useful too.

DOG BEHAVIOUR	
BODY LANGUAGE	<p>Dogs just like people respond differently in different situations, generally we see them fall into a few selected categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Friendly – Generally a relaxed demeanour, body will be free from any tension, soft eyed, easy wagging tail. Please remember that friendly dogs may be able to cope with individual stressful situations, however in a busy environment such as an event, it is common for several stressful situations to arise in a short space of time, which can lead to a reaction.</li> <li>✓ Stress – Generally you may see a lot of jumping up, barking, pacing, erratic behaviour on lead, red/bloodshot eyes, heavy panting etc. If you find you have a dog that you believe to be stressed by their current situation, try to remove them from busier areas, if you can reunite them with their owner as quickly as possible and advise the owner that their dog is distressed when separated from them.</li> <li>✓ Flight – This dog may appear worried. You will generally see a rounded back, tail clamped, stress panting, ears back, eyes wide. This type of dog may try to back away from you or back out of their lead or harness; Please see 'Emergency Situations' for how to appropriately handle this situation.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Freeze &amp; Fight – When a dog has begun to feel overwhelmed and unable to control the situation, we may see behaviours that are designed to make whatever scares them leave. Some examples of this are: growling, baring teeth, excessive barking, hard eyes.</li> <li>✓ Dogs may use aggression as a way of making something that scares them move away from them. The amount of distance required for them to relax will vary from dog to dog, so if a dog is reacting you should try to move yourself away from the busier areas and find somewhere quieter to wait for their owner.</li> <li>✓ If you see any of the more concerning behaviours before you take a hold of the dog advise the owner that you believe the dog to be worried &amp; for them to not take part in that obstacle.</li> <li>✓ Also ensure that you have flagged the owner and dog to a Team Leader so that we can keep a close tab on them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Allow the dog to approach you</li> <li>✓ Greet where possible side ways</li> <li>✓ If you would like to offer the dog your hand to sniff, leave it relaxed at your side</li> <li>✓ Try not to lean over or stare at the dog as these can be quite worrying signals to the dog</li> <li>✓ Keep your dog away from any other dogs and people</li> </ul>
DOG HANDLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 2 hands to hold the lead, 1 to hold the handle &amp; 1 to hold further down</li> <li>• Try to remain calm when handling the dog; You want to keep them under control (unable to lunge but not overly restricted).</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not try to pick up smaller dogs; If an owner tries to hand you a small dog, ask the owner to place the dog on the floor and to hand you the lead.</li> <li>• Only handle a dog you are physically capable to keep under control; you are responsible for risk assessing the size of the dog to your own physical capabilities. (Do you need a second person to help restrain dog?)</li> <li>• Try to touch the dog as little as possible; The chances are the dogs will become slightly distressed at their owners leaving them with a stranger and so continuously making a fuss of them is likely to increase their stress levels.</li> <li>• If a dog is becoming distressed move them away from the situation until they can be reunited with their owner and if the distress continues you can guide the owner and their dog to a quiet space.</li> <li>• Before you begin your volunteer shift, you will be given a briefing to ensure you are familiar with who your points of contact are for any emergencies or any unexpected events that may take place.</li> <li>• Here at Battersea we only use positive training methods, rather than methods using punishment or aversion. We will only train our dogs using these methods and require all volunteers to adopt a very similar attitude when representing Battersea.</li> </ul>
EMERGENCY SITUATIONS	<p><b>What to do with a loose dog?</b> – All owners have been told that their dog must be kept on a lead at all times. If you do come across a loose dog, remain calm, try to keep unnecessary people out of the way. Place the dog on a lead, where possible inform the owner, and walk to radio St Helier so that the owner can be located.</p> <p><b>What to do if you see or are brought to the attention of a stressful or aggressive incident</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Calm</li> <li>• Inform a Battersea staff member</li> <li>• Clear any unnecessary people out of the way – keep the area as clear as possible</li> </ul>