

## **Unsociable or Aggressive Dog Policy**

### **Definitions:**

Chief Instructor	Is a position appointed annually by the incoming committee.
Senior Instructor	Is a person who has instructed at the club for longer than 5 years.
MRODC	Macedon Ranges Obedience Dog Club.

### **Introduction**

The MRODC strives to promote responsible dog ownership and as part of that intent, the club also tries to assist, where possible in the re-socialisation of dogs who display unsocialised or aggressive behavior.

Whilst the MRODC uses a positive reinforcement training technique, and it is accepted that this technique has significant benefit for most dogs, there are a few dogs whose required training needs go beyond the scope of classes offered by this club. For those few, the clubs training environment may not be appropriate to meet the needs of dog and owner.

There is no single quick fix solution to altering an unsociable or aggressive dog to one which could be counted on as being a consistently reliable canine citizen. For its part the MRODC will assist any member who has an unsociable or aggressive dog to manage the unwanted behavior. The Club Member ultimately has the responsibility for adopting a recommended course of action outlined by the Clubs Chief Instructor, Senior Instruction and endorsed by the MRODC Committee. It may however, in some circumstance be necessary for the owner to employ the services of a professional or specialised animal behaviorist.

If a member of the Club elects to voluntarily put into place any of the procedures/processes recommended because they are concerned about their dog's behavior then the MRODC will support such action and undertake as in all cases, to assist the handler with as many strategies as possible.

Should the Handler of a dog identified by the MRODC as unsociable or aggressive not pursue or attempt to adopt any of the recommendations made by the MRODC, then the club has the right to request that the dog wears a suitable bandana (*Refer Post Incident managing of an unsociable or aggressive dog*), and that the Handler also has a muzzle fitted to the dog by a Veterinary Practitioner and it is worn at all times whilst on the MRODC premises. This will be assessed and decided by the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor.

In the case of extreme circumstance the Handler may be instructed not to bring the dog to the MRODC period. This will be assessed by the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor but will first be endorsed by the committee.

### **What is an unsociable or aggressive dog**

An unsociable or aggressive dog is one who, whilst attending and/or participating at the MRODC premises or at MRODC activities makes, or attempts to make negative physical contact with any

person or animal. Negative contact is that which is potentially harmful or dangerous to persons or other dogs. Some examples might be, but are not limited to the following;

- Snapping
- Growling
- Baring Teeth
- Charging or Lunging with a negative intent
- Raising Hackles
- Biting

These kinds of signals should have the owner immediately adopt steps that redirect focus away from the other dog.

## **Protocols**

### **Assessing dogs for unsociable or aggressive behavior**

In some circumstances the breed of dog is noted for unsociable behavior. In other situations the dog may have experienced some trauma (often unknown to the owner) that has triggered the unsociable or aggressive nature of the dog.

During the induction of all Handlers and Dogs into the club, each dog will be assessed for its ability to socialise with humans and other dogs. This assessment will be completed using two checks.

1. During the presentation, the presenter of the induction training shall verbally request from each handler an understanding of their dog's socialisation abilities, or if the dog is known to have an unsociable or aggressive behavior.
2. Post the presentation but before the dog enters class, the presenter of the induction training (with assistance from other instructors if required) will physically meet and greet each new dog and make an assessment of the dog's socialisation abilities. (this could be included in the fit out of a correction collar purchased)

If the dog shows any signs of unsociable or aggressive behavior, then the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor should be asked to independently assess the dog.

Using the guidelines from the post incident managing of an unsociable or aggressive dog, the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor shall determine the most appropriate form of management for the dog. This may include a safety first approach where the dog is required to wear a bandana (*Refer Post Incident managing of an unsociable or aggressive dog*), and/or muzzle until such time as the dog has interacted with both humans and other dogs and a more accurate assessment can be made. A dog(s) identified by the MRODC as being unsociable or aggressive, or have been involved in an incident at the MRODC grounds, will be continually assessed for signs of behavioral improvement.

### **Training techniques for unsociable or aggressive dogs**

Essentially at the Club, it is through training that the owners attempt to increase socialisation between dogs. The owner should be able to quickly identify and recognize the onset of an unsociable or aggressive dog that may commit to negative behavior.

As a general statement, unsociable or aggressive behavior in dogs is most often detected in their first 12 months. Puppy Class is an ideal way to have very young dogs socialise without fear- an excellent substitute for litter behavior where hierarchies are established.

However at all stages of training in the Club, instructors will promote the socialisation of dogs in their respective classes through various obedience and other skill set exercises included in training programs.

In situations where a dog is particularly aggressive towards other dogs it may become necessary to make the dog take "time out", ie the dog may need at times to be separated until such time as it calms down enough to tolerate the 'partnering' by another member. Sometimes 'time out' may even have to be extended for the entire lesson if the dog is really having a bad day.

A deliberate "quiet time" strategy may be recommended whereby the owner of the aggressive dog is partnered by another member in the same class with their dog and they spend 3-7 minutes in a quiet area away from other distractions. This pairing entails the two owners to drop their dogs in close proximity to each other whilst they themselves remain relaxed and calm talking to each other thus avoiding any 'anxiety signals' being picked up by the dogs. This regimen can assist the assertive dog in coming to grips with at least the other dogs in the class.

## **Post Incident managing of an unsociable or aggressive dog**

### **1. Dog Aggression Towards Humans**

All incidents, however minor of dog/human aggression must be reported to the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor as soon as practical. The Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor will in turn assemble all parties involved and complete an incident report. The first priority of the club will be to ensure the care and wellbeing of all people and dogs involved.

Depending on the seriousness of the aggression, the Chief Instructor may request all parties to retire from any further activity on the MRODC grounds and premises for the day or if required, for a longer period until a full and complete review of the incident has been undertaken.

Dogs that *display* unsociable or aggressive behavior to human's will be required to wear a **red** colored bandana to identify it for the purpose where instructors and other club members and their dogs are made more alert when approaching such a dog.

Handlers who train a dog(s) that have *committed* unsociable or aggressive behavior to human's will be required in addition to wearing a bandana, also be required to muzzle the dog whilst it is on Club training grounds. This will be assessed and decided by the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor.

### **2. Dog Aggression Towards other Dogs**

If a minor incident occurs where a dog ineffectively growls/snaps at another dog ineffectively (essentially keep out of my face and place) then the class instructor will focus the handlers' attention

on overseeing the dogs behavior. This may be as simple as providing more space between the two dogs.

If the aggression reoccurs or continues, then the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor will be asked to assess both dogs and Chief Instructor or Senior Instructor will determine what actions/equipment that the handlers should employ with or on the dog to provide greater control and minimise the impact in the case of a subsequent incidents.

In the cases where a severe attack occurs then the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor will in turn assemble all parties involve and complete an incident report. The first priority of the club will be to ensure the care and well being of all people and dogs involved.

Depending on the seriousness of the aggression, the Chief Instructor may request all parties to retire from any further activity on the MRODC grounds and premises for the day or if required, for a longer period until a full and complete review of the incident has been undertaken.

Dogs that *display* unsociable or aggressive behavior to other dogs will be required to wear a **fluorescent** colored bandana to identify it for the purpose where instructors and other club members and their dogs are made more alert when they are approaching such a dog.

Handlers who train a dog(s) that have *committed* unsociable or aggressive behavior to other dogs maybe required in addition to wearing a bandana, also be required to muzzle the dog whist it is on Club training grounds. This will be assessed and decided by the Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor.

*Note:* If the Handler of the unsociable or aggressive dog is not prepared to follow these protocols then he/she may be asked to leave the club until the dog can demonstrate acceptable behavior which is to be assessed and decided by Chief Instructor or a Senior Instructor.

## **Conclusion**

1. All new members will receive a copy of the unsociable dog policy;
2. All existing members will be provided a copy of the unsociable dog policy;
3. A register will be created to ensure all member have read, understood and will comply with the MRODC unsociable or aggressive dog policy.