



May 7, 2024

## Dog to Dog Reactivity and Red Bandanas - Memo

We recently received several queries and feedback from nose work trial attendees regarding our stance on reactive dogs with regards to K9NW/NACSW-sanctioned events. As there appears to be some ongoing confusion and misrepresentation at NACSW and other scent work venue competitions, below is a copy of the official announcement that was posted to the NACSW membership in February 2024, for clarification.

Please feel free to share this information with your students and fellow nose workers. We hope this information is helpful.

### [DID YOU KNOW] Dog to Dog Reactivity and Red Bandanas

We hope to clarify the intent and background of red bandana dogs at K9 Nose Work events. The intention of NACSW is to keep experiences positive and focused on nose work for both dogs and handlers. By applying management protocols at K9 Nose Work events, such as leash management and crating or securing dogs in vehicles during the event, potentially negative dog-to-dog interactions are limited. This also provides downtime that is beneficial for mental and olfactory recovery and stamina for dogs working over many hours. Additionally, the atmosphere of the event exhibits controlled and managed dogs which is the impression we hope to make with our trial hosts and location owners so that we can continue to acquire interesting and exciting trial venues. NACSW has been able to include the option to trial for dogs with manageable reactivity because of these protocols.

“Reactive dogs” (aka Red Bandana dogs) refers to those dogs that have **SPACE ISSUES ONLY WITH OTHER DOGS**. The allowance for dogs with manageable reactivity to participate in trials was **not intended for dogs with severe aggression toward other dogs, nor aggression toward humans**. NACSW does not condone dogs with human aggression participating in trials, nor does NACSW make accommodations at trials for dogs that are reactive to humans.

The trial environment may have too much social pressure or too many dogs present for some dogs to participate. Dogs in competition should be able to handle the trial day environment **with no special requests**. If a dog is behaving in a reactive way, **that** is an indicator that the stress level may be above what the dog can comfortably handle.

At trials, reactive dogs should be able to be walked in the parking lot or elimination area and pass other dogs without barking and lunging at them. They also should be able to walk on a leash through

the trial area and be manageable at the staging areas. Some handlers choose to have their dogs wear red bandanas as a reminder to others that their dogs need more space from other dogs when walking to the search area and back. For NACSW trials, all dogs must be on no longer than a 6-ft. leash when not searching, kept a safe distance apart, and are not allowed to socialize.

A team may be dismissed from a trial by the Certifying Official for inappropriate or unsafe behavior, not just during searches, but anytime and anywhere at the trial venue.

If you have any trial-related questions, please email [trial@nacsw.net](mailto:trial@nacsw.net)