

Rule Notification FY2324-3 Card Protocol and Dog Capability

At its meeting on 6 November 2023 the AFA committee resolved to modify the signal card protocol to give judges discretion to determine whether to issue a yellow or red card when an interfering dog makes contact with another dog having regard to the degree of contact. Also, at the meeting it was resolved to give judges and AFA representatives the power to exclude a dog from a flyball event if in their opinion the dog was not capable of completing the course safely.

The rule changes reflecting these decisions are attached to this notification and will be effective on an on-trial basis from 1 January 2024. The rules published on the AFA website will be updated shortly.

Background

Since 1 June 2021 the rules have provided that a red card must be issued when a dog interferes with the opposing team and makes contact with another dog.

The AFA committee received a query from a member concerned about the application of this provision at a race meeting.

The matter was referred to the rules sub-committee which obtained input from the judge who had issued the red card which had given rise to the query. It was noted that although the contact made had been negligible the rule was explicit, and the judge had been obliged to issue a red card.

The sub-committee supported the view of the supervisory judge that judges should have discretion in determining the appropriate card to issue for interference having regard to the degree and severity of any contact and recommended appropriate rule changes to the AFA committee which considered and accepted the recommendation at its meeting in August 2023.

As part of the discussion at the AFA committee it was noted that because a dog cannot interfere with its own team there are no consequences under the rules where a dog makes contact with another dog from its team. This led to discussion concerning dog safety generally. The committee requested the rules sub-committee to give further consideration to dog safety issues and make recommendations as to any further rule changes which should be considered. The committee decided that introduction of the changes approved to the signal card protocol should be deferred pending a report from the rules sub-committee in case further rule amendments were approved.

The rules sub-committee determined that the approved changes to the signal card protocol were adequate and no further changes to the protocol were required. However, the sub-committee consider that judges and (being a safety matter) AFA representatives should have discretion to exclude a dog from a flyball event if in their opinion the dog is unable to safely complete the course or is not in sufficient control to compete in a safe manner.

At its November 2023 meeting the AFA committee accepted the sub-committee's recommendation that the rules should be changed accordingly.

Rule Changes

Card Protocol Rule Changes

The following changes (in red) to the card definitions were approved:

Yellow Card

interference when no contact is made with another dog or when the **judge** considers any contact is incidental and minor

Red Card

- *second incident of a yellow card offence*
- **interference** when contact is made with another dog and the **judge** considers the contact to be other than incidental and minor

Black Card

- *further incident of interference after red card offence*
- **aggression** or suspected **aggression**
- ~~*third incident of yellow card offence*~~
- ~~*second incident of red card offence*~~

Dog Capability Rule Changes

The following changes (in red) to Rule 4.5 were approved:

4.5 Dog health, ~~and fitness~~ and capability

All dogs must be healthy, fit and well. Dogs must not race if:

- *in season;*
- *lame;*
- *recovering from surgery;*
- *obese; or*
- *otherwise not in a physical condition to race safely.*

A **judge** may exclude a dog from a **race meeting** if the **judge** believes that the dog is not physically able to race safely.

Dogs must be capable of completing the course safely. A **judge** or **AFA representative** may exclude a dog if the **judge** or **AFA representative** considers that the dog is unable to safely complete the course or is not in sufficient control to compete in a safe manner.