

Indiana 4-H Aggressive Dog Policy

The safety and well-being of 4-H members and volunteers is a primary concern with all Indiana 4-H Program opportunities. Families should err on the side of caution in selecting a dog for the 4-H member to exhibit. A dog that has a known history of aggression or biting is not appropriate for involvement in the 4-H Program. On occasion, the 4-H member may have difficulty managing their dog within the 4-H Program. The following guidance has been provided for the Indiana 4-H Dog Program as the owner/exhibitor of the dog bears responsibility for the dog's actions. In the subsequent policy, the term "4-H Dog Personnel" will include County 4-H Volunteers, County Extension Educators, State 4-H Staff and appropriate County and State Fair Directors.

A dog that bites a human or another dog at any 4-H Dog Event must be immediately removed from that event by the 4-H member and will subsequently be excused from the 4-H Program. The member should be directed by 4-H Dog Personnel on-site to remove the dog if the member does not do so willingly. If a determination is made by the 4-H Dog Personnel that a dog bit in self-defense, it may be allowed to remain at the 4-H Dog Event.

Dogs that display other signs of aggression, including but not limited to barking and standing ground, growling, lunging and snapping will be given one verbal warning. They will be removed from the event after the second violation at the same event. To be removed from a 4-H Dog Event, there must be two violations at the same event.

Any dog that is removed from a 4-H Dog Event due to aggressive behavior will be placed on probation for 2 weeks. Written notification of the probation will be given to the 4-H member. The 2-week period will start upon written notification to the 4-H member. While on probation, the 4-H Dog Personnel and the 4-H member and parents will work together to determine the best course of action for the dog. This may include (but is not limited to) working individually with the dog and 4-H member, asking the 4-H member to use a different dog or having the 4-H member attend events without their dog. At the end of the designated probation period, 4-H Dog Personnel will make a determination regarding the dog's return to 4-H Dog Events.

Dogs that are removed from a 4-H Dog Event twice will be immediately excused from the 4-H program and will not be allowed to re-enter. Excusing a dog from the 4-H Program is rare but could be necessary for the safety of 4-H members, volunteers and other participating dogs. Should a dog be excused from the program, it must be remembered that the action is against the dog and not the 4-H member. 4-H Dog Personnel should look at many solutions and encourage the 4-H member to attend classes without their dog while training it at home or potentially bringing another dog to 4-H events. 4-H members will always be welcome in every other part of the dog project.

In the event that a dog is removed from a 4-H Dog Event or excused from the 4-H Program, 4-H Dog Personnel should report such to the State 4-H Office so that the information is available to all county 4-H dog programs and the Indiana State Fair.

