

Advice on running a dog show in your park

1. Be clear on the objectives of this activity

- Be clear about the objectives of running a dog show – typically the objectives are not only to identify the best dog, but would include things like:
 - Encouraging dog walkers to feel more closely connected to the park Friends Group
 - Encouraging responsible dog ownership
 - Encouraging respect for the park environment and all park users
 - Encouraging responsible dog owners to feel welcomed in the park
 - Encouraging dog owners to join the Friends Group

2. Get a local dog-owner who walks their dog in the park to be the main organiser (as far as possible)

- Talk to dog-walkers about the idea / put up posters saying “Dog walkers – would you like a dog show in this park? If so, please contact:.....”

3. Get a sponsor / local pet-related business to donate prizes / pay for any equipment needed

- Approach local pet supplies stores / dog walking businesses / dog grooming businesses / vet’s surgeries to ask for sponsorship / prizes.
- In return, they can give out prizes / display a poster by the event / have their name on dog show flyers / hand out leaflets to dog-owners at the dog show (NB usually you can’t put any posters just for the sponsor on park railings or park buildings).

4. Hold it in a fenced-off area

- A lot easier for controlling the dogs and not upsetting any other park users and it will reduce any insurance premium.
- If you don’t have a fenced-off area already, you can create one with 1m high plastic mesh fencing on a roll and upright stakes. The mesh (available in orange or green) is £20 for 50m – see sure-green.com website: <http://www.sure-green.com/products/fencing-mesh/orange-plastic-barrier-mesh-fencing.php#tabs>
- (Maybe SWLEN could get some 1m mesh fencing for different Friends Groups to borrow?)

5. Get the paperwork prepared

- If more than 50 people will be attending, it will be an official park event and you’ll need to go through the Richmond Park Events team and complete their forms, risk assessment, etc (NB they need at least 6 months’ notice).
- If less than 50 people attend (maybe you will limit it to 30 dogs being entered), you will still need:
 - Event insurance (SWLEN can advise on cheap deals that they have)
 - Risk assessment (Example available)
 - Entry form, which entrants complete when they enter (one form per dog per class entered); this should also have a part for the owner to sign saying they will be responsible for their dog’s behaviour at all times and keep their dog on a lead in the dog show area. Also get signature for using pic of dog and owner on Friends website in report of event. Entrants should be aged 18+ (example entry form available).
 - Participant name stickers with first name marked on (e.g. self-adhesive coloured paper sticker) so paid up / signed up entrants can be quickly identified).

- Dog Show rules: listing things like types of classes, judges decisions are final, all owners will be responsible for their dog's behaviour at all times in dog show area, no cash alternatives for prizes, adherence to animal welfare policy, etc; have rules laminated and available for inspection at all times.
- Publicity poster / handbill to give out to potential participants – remember to say cost of entry / when entrants have to be registered by / when judging will take place / when prizes will be awarded.
- Richmond Council Responsible Dog Ownership leaflets and posters to be displayed on a board encouraging responsible dog poo disposal etc
- Have plentiful supply of sign-up forms etc for Friends membership and someone to promote membership / explain what the Friends do.

6. Other key points:

- Have a supply of yummy dog biscuits (donated by sponsor?) that can be used to distract dogs that are getting restive / starting to misbehave.
- Have water bowls for dogs to drink from.
- Have supply of plastic bags for you-know-what.
- Have name badges for all organisers.
- Borrow PA equipment from SWLEN to announce judging / prize-giving (if event is big enough to warrant this).
- Designate someone reliable to be official photographer - with name badge. Ensure they check that all owners / dogs have signed to give their permission for their photos / dog's photos to be used and clarify what they will be used for e.g. Friends website. Ensure they do not under any circumstances take any pictures of children.
- Have a first aid kit and someone who knows what to do if a dog bites someone (if it is an official event you will need to do a full risk assessment / have a security plan).
- Have refreshments for dog owners (free tea and biscuits with entry?).
- Inform local press in advance to see if they will run a story (maybe you supply them pics and copy).

Sue Burden / Friends of North Sheen Recreation Ground / January 2016