

Making

a Splash

by Elise Remp

Looking for something exciting to get into with your four-legged friends this summer? Jay Harris, president of Carolina DockDogs, gave Dog Living Magazine the scoop on the new Carolina club and all of the great competitions and family friendly (and, of course, dog friendly) fun it has to offer. Get ready! Get wet! Go!

Why was the club started?

[In] January 2009 the decision was made to form an affiliate club of DockDogs Inc. Currently there are 26 [affiliated clubs] across the U.S. and Canada. Forming Carolina DockDogs offered a way to have events locally and be supported by local people. We can now bring this great sport to any backyard in NC.

Who can participate? Are all breeds allowed?

Anyone can participate. There is an age requirement for handlers (minimum 7 years old) and dogs (minimum 6 months old). One of the greatest things about our sport [is that] all breeds are welcome. We even have special recognition for Lap Dogs (17" or less at withers), Veteran Dogs (7 years plus), as well as Young Handlers (7-15 years old).

What is required to participate?

One handler, one dog, and one toy/object. There are rules on the toy used on the dock. [The toy] must be floatable and retrievable, and cannot be alive (or previously alive) or edible. The dog does not have to retrieve the toy nor is the handler required to throw an object. If a dog will jump into the pool without being motivated by a toy, that is perfectly acceptable.

In 2001, a person in Arkansas arrived at an event with a live raccoon. He was asked to leave. Safety is very important at DockDogs events. Any dogs with a sign of injury or wounds are not allowed to participate.

What do participants need to bring to the event?

Any items for your dog's comfort and security: food, water, kennels, etc. Kennels are not required, but are highly suggested. The dog must be on a 4' leash or kenneled at all times, unless they are on the dock. Tents, canopies, chairs, refreshments [are recommended] for the humans.

What kind of training does my dog need in order to participate and where should I start?

No training required to participate. Many dogs' skills are based purely on natural instinct to retrieve an object that has been thrown. However, there are several things you can work on prior to attending a DockDogs event. The [commands] "sit" and "stay" are very critical to long jumps on the dock. Try to place the dog and walk at least 40' then give the command to come. If there is a pond, lake or pool available, work with the dog going in the water. Take it slow at first and try to work up to actually jumping from the bank into the water.



Photo courtesy Carolina DockDogs

Who are the usual participants and audience at DockDogs events?

Usually the most common factor with participants is the love of competition with their dog. I like to tell people, "When you are on the dock with your dog, it's your time and nobody can take that away from you!" Everyone is a winner in this sport, with one goal, to get our dogs wet. DockDogs is so inclusive, and the participants reflect this as well – people who may not have otherwise spent time together build some of their strongest friendships while participating in this family friendly sport. The audience ranges from babies to older adults. The kids in the audience usually are the most excited. Everyone loves the sight of a dog flying through the air into water.

What type of events take place at a DockDogs competition?

There are three sports at DockDogs: Big Air, Extreme Vertical, and Speed Retrieve. Teams that participate in all three events can also sign up for Iron Dog, which measures which team is the best overall in all three sports. Big Air is a competition for distance. Extreme Vertical is a competition for height. Speed Retrieve is a competition against the clock for the fastest time.

Does it cost anything to join? How do you join?

Carolina DockDogs annual membership fee is \$50. Members will have access to all Carolina DockDogs practices, training and updates for any special activities. The membership can be for a family. All family members will have access to all activities as long as one family adult is a member.

Can you live anywhere in North Carolina and still participate?

Living in NC is not a requirement to participate or become a member. Carolina DockDogs club members reside in South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. Carolina DockDogs is trying to secure annual events from the coast to the mountains of NC.

Want to get your dog involved? Contact Jay Harris at jeh99@windstream.net for an application. The club is also currently working on their website: www.carolinadockdogs.com.