

# Duluth Retriever Club Grounds Use Guidelines

One of the main benefits enjoyed by members of the Duluth Retriever Club is that they have access to properties owned by the club. Other properties are made available to Club members through the generosity of local land owners. If we were to lose the use of these properties it is quite likely that the Club as we know it would cease to exist. It is imperative, therefore, that we use these properties responsibly. In addition, since several training groups may be using the grounds simultaneously, we need to respect the activities of other Club members. The foregoing information is intended as a guide to responsible use of Club grounds.

## INFORMAL RULES FOR RESPONSIBLE GROUND USE

Actually, the Club has very few rules of any kind. The formal rules that pertain to grounds use deal mostly with potential conflicts over access. These are covered below. Over time, however, Club members have developed informal guidance on acceptable behavior as far as grounds use issues are concerned. In addition, the Club Bylaws provide a procedure for dealing with complaints regarding grounds use, or any other issues. This procedure is set up to deal with any conduct that is considered prejudicial to the best interests of the Duluth Retriever Club. This means that you don't have to break one of the formal rules to warrant a complaint. Disregard for one of the informal rules can also generate a Board action. Fortunately, this seldom occurs, since the overwhelming majority of Club members understand how fortunate they are to have access to good training grounds and are anxious to keep it that way. So with that in mind the following informal rules for responsible grounds use are provided.

- 1. KEEP THE GATES TO DRC PROPERTIES LOCKED.** Lock the gate when you depart the property, even if you intend to come back after awhile. The gates should be kept open when training, especially if you are expecting someone who does NOT have a key. This could include the garbage collector, someone dropping off birds, a judge that is arriving early, etc. In these instances it is important for the person responsible for this activity to leave a note on the gate with instructions to keep it unlocked. It also signals to our neighbors living around the DRC that someone is in the process of training dogs and they should NOT enter the property. As a final note, these instructions pertain only to properties owned by the Club. For properties owned by private individuals you should use the universal rule of gates which is to leave it as you found it.
- 2. STAY ON ESTABLISHED ROADWAYS.** During the spring or following a hard rain the grounds can become very soft. Do not drive off established roadways since this will leave ruts and may result in your vehicle becoming stuck. When you park stay as close to a roadway as possible and avoid wet areas. If you leave any ruts you should repair them. For this reason it is a good idea to carry along a small shovel. Once these ruts dry out they can become a problem for the equipment used to mow/hay the properties. Properties owned by local landowners are cut annually to provide hay. They should be treated like any other agricultural lands. Late in the summer after the hay has been cut the ground may become very firm. Under these circumstances local landowners may grant permission to drive across the fields. In general, however, this should be avoided.

The dam on the main Club property can be driven across. Roads that cross dams on properties owned by local landowners should be avoided. If you need to get to the other side of a pond drive around or park and walk. You may see the landowner driving across these dams. That is their prerogative. Club members should stay off.

- 3. PICK UP AFTER YOURSELF AND OTHERS.** This includes all trash, food, and empty shotgun shells. If you use surveyor's tape to mark blinds and/or marks, pick it up when you are done training (better yet, purchase or construct portable blind markers). Don't leave tape tied to bushes or overhanging branches even if you intend to come back the next day. If you see tape left by someone else, put it in you pocket. Also, never leave dead birds in the field. Believe it or not this is easy to do, so pay careful attention to the number of birds that you take into the field and be sure that you take the same number out.

- 4. HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHER TRAINERS AND THEIR DOGS.** If you arrive at a particular training site and see that it is occupied you have three choices: 1) join the people using the site, 2) wait for them to finish, or 3) find another place to train. Option 1 may or may not make sense, depending on who the people are and what they are doing. You should not expect them to change what they are doing to accommodate you. You may find, however, that they are doing something that interests you. In this case you should feel free to walk up and to talk to them, as long as you don't interfere with a working dog. If you're not interested in what they are doing you can ask how long they think that they will be training. Often, fifteen minutes of patience will get you access to the site that you want.

When you are making these decisions the question may arise: what constitutes a training site. This is a good question and the answer is it depends. In general, the members of two different training groups should not be able to see one another. This is particularly true when you are dealing with advanced dogs since we train these dogs to retrieve birds that may be hundreds of yards away. This type of dog will view someone three hundred yards away as a potential mark. What this means, for example, is that if someone is training anywhere on the pond in front of the Clubhouse, then the entire Clubhouse pond is occupied.

A more difficult situation arises concerning noise, especially if one group is running marked retrieves while another is running blinds. The problem is that whistles blown by those running blinds can interfere with dogs that are running marks. The same thing can happen when you have two parties in close proximity, both of which are running blinds. In situations like this you should use common sense. If you have any doubts, approach the group (or individual) that was there first and ask if any noise you make will interfere with their activities. As you do this, keep in mind that noise travels. Just because you can't see someone doesn't mean that they won't be affected by your whistle. As guidance, you can assume that whistles blown at the Brown's property will be heard by dogs on the main Club pond, and vice versa. The two ponds on the Roningen's properties are also close enough to result in noise issues. In either of these cases, however, it may be possible for two groups to run marks, provided that this does not result in extensive handling.

Finally, the issue of respect for others cuts two ways. Just because you show up first doesn't mean that you should feel free to do anything you want. It would be inappropriate, for example, to do yard work (e.g., casting drills) in front of the Clubhouse, especially during the summer when others wish to use the pond. If you want to train the water by all means do so. But if your training does not involve water, stay away from the ponds, especially during periods of peak usage.

- 5. TRAINING WITH LIVE BIRDS REQUIRES SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.** Gun safety is of paramount importance. In addition, it is important to consider where the shotgun shell pellets may land. Live flyers should never be flighted in the direction of any nearby paved roads or dwellings. Planted birds (for flushing or pointing dogs) should be located well away from roadways, both for gun safety as well as safety of the dogs. The use of live birds also requires consideration of the animals. Treat training birds with respect. Dispatch any cripples as soon as possible by humane methods. The Duluth Retriever Club prohibits, on its Grounds, shooting of fire arms by anyone under the influence of alcohol. Anyone working at a Field Trial or Hunt Test needs to refrain from using alcohol until the last dog has run.
- 6. ALL TRAINING MUST CEASE 24 HOURS PRIOR TO ANY FIELD TRIAL OR HUNTING TEST.** This applies to all Club members even if they have no connection to the event (as a worker, participant, etc.). There are at least three reasons for this. First, this is required by AKC rules and procedures. Whenever we host one of these events we act as an extension of AKC and must abide by their rules. Second, judges generally spend the day before each trial or test touring the grounds and setting up tests. They need to be able to do this free of distractions. Third, training the day before a test may leave scented areas that will confuse dogs running the event.

7. **PRESERVE AND PROTECT CLUB AND LOCAL LANDOWNERS PROPERTY.** People who are not Club members do not belong on Club property. If you are in doubt about someone ask to see their parking pass. If you are a member and are asked by another member to show your pass you should not take offence. At various times the Club has been used by local residents for fishing, waterfowl hunting, deer hunting, and trapping. Others use it as a place to run their ATVs and walk their dogs. Our Clubhouse and outbuildings have been broken into and shot at. Live birds have been released and items have been stolen from vehicles and trailers. Good neighbor relations are important. This does not, however, give non-members the right to use our properties for personal recreation. Report all questionable activities to the Board of Directors. Provide descriptions (license numbers, type of ATV or dog, etc.) if you can. Confrontations are not encouraged. If appropriate, however, you may suggest that trespassers join the Club if they want to continue to use the property (provided that it is a condoned use).

#### **FORMAL RULES PERTAINING TO GROUNDS USE**

Two formal rules have been adopted over the years pertaining to grounds use. The first deals with use by professional trainers. The membership of the Club includes several pros. These individuals are valued members and they deserve the same respect given to other members. That said, pros are required to limit their training of client dogs to weekdays, and they must suspend their training activities by 5:00 PM. The reason for this is that most of our amateur members train during the evening after work or on weekends. In the past there have been questions regarding this policy when a pro is training with clients who also happen to be Club members. In such cases the pro may train after 5:00 or on weekends, provided that they limit their training to their own personal dog(s). In this instance the pro may be viewed as having the same rights as any other member who is training their own dog.

The second rule, which deals specifically with the use of Club ponds, was enacted prior the completion of the two ponds on the Roningen properties and there is some question whether it still applies. It is described here in the interest of completeness and to make a point. The rule stipulates a 1 hour time limit on the use of either piece of Club water (main pond or Brown's pond). The clock in this instance starts when a second party shows up and expresses interest in using a piece of water that is currently in use. If only one party shows up then the clock never starts. The point to be made is this: If you are training a piece of water and someone shows up it is considered good etiquette to invite them to join you. Even if you are doing something (e.g., water blinds, swim-by) that you are sure they won't be interested in, invite them to participate. You may be surprised.