

Dogs on AMC Activities: Scenarios for Leaders

This document provides guidance for leaders about pets, service animals, and AMC activities.

Pets – primarily companions for their owners.

AMC Leaders can include or exclude pets on their events according to their own preferences provided they are permitted by the land manager. Leaders who include pets should evaluate them according to [Basic Screening for Dogs](#). See below.

Service Animals – trained to assist a person who has a disability.

These dogs have been trained to perform specific tasks in service to their owners. Without the presence of the dog, their owners could not attend the AMC event. Service Animals should be evaluated according to [Basic Screening for Dogs](#). See below.

Notes on Including Service Animals:

1. Our overarching aim with respect to a service animal is to include them provided they are fit enough, have appropriate equipment/food, and the trip is reasonably suitable for dogs.
2. Know the regulations of the Land Manager. Land Managers that offer public access generally must accommodate service animals even when they do not allow pets. Confirm any requirements with respect to leashing. We must uphold the regulations of the land managers.
3. There are situations where a service animal cannot be included:
 - a. Safety/Preparedness of the service animal. Does the animal have suitable fitness and protective equipment (feet, temperature) to attend the trip that is planned? You can ask the same questions that you might ask a participant such as, How has the service animal prepared to walk ten miles? See below for more on screening.
 - b. Can the animal perform the necessary physical activities to participate or would the very nature of the trip planned compromise the safety of a dog? For example, terrain, weather, or trails with ladders, may not be safe or even possible for a dog to manage.
4. Most importantly, when we include the service animal, we include the person and this makes the dog part of the group. We cannot require someone with a service animal to walk at the back of the group. We cannot send out a message to all participants to inform them that we are including a service animal. **If participants arrive and decide they cannot be in the company of the service animal, they can choose not to participate.**
5. Comfort Animals or Therapy Dogs are not considered service animals by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Basic Screening for Dogs

- Screen the dog(s) according to similar criteria as participant(s) (preparedness, fitness, protective equipment, etc.).
- Gear list should address the needs of the dog(s): food, water, first aid, protective equipment, etc.
- Require owners to observe Leave No Trace principles and pick up/carry out any waste.
- Be very clear about leashing expectations.
- Where lodging is included as part of the event, be clear about expectations regarding accommodation of the animal. For example, animals must remain with their owner at all times. Indicate if there are areas where pets cannot go, and the owner will have to stay with the pet such as a restaurant (this may not apply to a service animal).

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Scenario One – Trip is posted as ‘Dog Friendly’. Registration required.

When a participant calls to register for the trip with their pet:

1. Ask about how the dog behaves with other dogs and in groups of people.
2. Review [Basic Screening for Dogs](#) (above)

When a participant states that their dog is a service animal:

1. In addition to points 1 and 2 listed above, ensure they know that non-service animals will be present on the trip, so they can make an informed decision about whether or not their service animal can perform their tasks in that environment.

Scenario Two – Trip is posted as ‘Not appropriate for pets.’ – Registration required.

Leaders Should:

1. Respond to requests from people who ask to bring their pets by telling them the trip is not appropriate for pets and that pets will not be permitted to join the group. Leaders can exclude pets for any reason including personal preference. Sometimes participants offer feedback that AMC should offer more trips that include pets. Leaders can encourage them to take leadership training, so they can offer the trips they’d like.
2. Respond to inquiries about including a service animal:
 - a. Inform the participant about why and how AMC screens for fitness and preparedness for our events, and that these criteria apply to both participants and service animals.
 - b. Describe the trip with an eye towards assessing its suitability for a dog including terrain, equipment, weather conditions, land manager regulations, etc. Note that most land managers must accommodate service animals.
 - c. Follow list of [Basic Screening for Dogs](#) (above)

Scenario Three – Pet or Service Dog Arrives for Event without Prior Notification

1. Service Animals
 - a. Welcome the participant and provide feedback that advanced notice of the animal joining the trip is appreciated and strongly encouraged for reasons of safety, and to ensure we follow the rules of the land manager.
 - b. Leader should screen the service animal according to questions described in [Basic Screening for Dogs](#).
2. Pets or companion dogs
 - a. Leader can decide not to include the pet. Leader can simply state that pets are not permitted on their trips for the safety and comfort of their participants.
 - b. Leader can decide to allow the pet to join the group and should screen the animal as described [Basic Screening for Dogs](#).