

Walking with Clumbers: Leaders Guide

This guidance has been prepared for organisers and leaders of Clumber Walks. It provides information on the role of the walks in promoting the breed and in encouraging owners to come together to enjoy the pleasure of being with a pack of these wonderful dogs and their owners.

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For more information on this Guide or leading a walk please contact Barbara Weston: tel 01530 456071 or email barbaraweston57@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Pet owners are the largest group of pedigree dog owners but as a rule, they are under represented in Breed Clubs and on Breed Club committees. The Kennel Club have written that the “main purpose of breed clubs is to organise and run dog shows Ordinary dog owners rarely join breed clubs because they are not in the business of breeding and showing but maybe, if they love a particular breed, they should. If ordinary dog owners became involved in breed clubs, their interests could be represented and respected. After all it is pet owners who buy the dogs which the breeders don’t want and who provide the finances to allow breeders to pursue their hobby and conduct their business”. It is hoped that taking part in these walks will encourage owners to join and participate in the activities of the Breed Club so that it represents the views of a wider range of Clumber owners.

Being a Clumber owner, who does not show or work their dog, can be a solitary life as the owner, and dog, rarely meet, or have fun, with other Clumbers and their owners. Clumber Walks are designed to change that. They provide an opportunity to meet and have a coffee and lunch with other Clumber owners, and spend about an hour walking with the dogs as part of a Clumber pack. It is real mood-booster watching the dogs running around together, while you walk and talk with fellow Clumber obsessed people. The walks also provide a chance to seek the advice of, and learn from, the experience of other owners. The walks are not restricted to Clumber owners; friends of walkers (four and two legged) are welcome as are Clumber enthusiasts and potential owners.

The walks are held under the banner of the Clumber Spaniel Club so the event is covered by the Club Public Liability insurance. However we would still advise owners to insure their own dogs, and while Club membership is desirable, and walkers can join on the walk, non-members are welcome but are asked to pay a small charge to help with the costs of the event. Walk organisers should make Club membership application forms available to non-members.

2. ROLE OF THE WALK LEADER AND WALKS COORDINATOR

It is hoped that we will soon have volunteer Walk Leaders in each region of the Country. Because of the conditions of the insurance policy they must be Club members but they do not need to be committee members or have participated in any other club events.

The Walks Coordinators, currently Barbara and Rod Weston, will be responsible for national publicity, formal contact with the venue, and central administration to ensure consistent standards and to allow the local Walk Leader to concentrate on the actual walk. They will also collect the names of participants and prepare the walk register.

There is a central risk assessment and a Code of Practice and the precautions listed must be followed. More user-friendly 'Guides' have also been produced and potential Leaders are asked to read and ensure that they understand these before deciding to arrange a walk. Leaders must be members of the Clumber Spaniel Club so that both organisers and public covered by the Clumber Club Insurance policy. There should be a designated first aider on each walk, who should carry first aid materials, unless first aid facilities are present on the site.

Supporting documents referred to above are available to help the organisers and can be downloaded from the Club website:

- a. Clumber Walks: Risk Assessment
- b. Clumber Walks: Code of Practice
- c. Clumber Walks: Walkers Guide**
- d. Clumber Walks: Leaders Guide**
- e. Clumber Walks: Marshals Guide**

Also available from Barbara Weston are:

- f. Emergency contact form
- g. Walk register
- h. Insurance Details
- i. Draft Press Release

3. CHOOSING A VENUE

We have found that Country Parks or National Trust estates make a good venue. The venue should have good road links and be located so that it can be easily reached by owners within as wide a radius as possible. It should have:

- An adequate car park
- A safe waiting location when people arrive. e.g. cafe which welcomes dogs and provides outdoor seating, and preferable a covered area in case it rain,
- Public toilets.

The annual walk programme usually includes a summer and Christmas Walk at Clumber Park the historical home of the Clumber Spaniel. We also hold, with local support and Leaders, walks when we holiday in other parts of the UK. If you interested in leading a walk, near where you live please, contact us and we will send you further details.

Once the Walk Leader has decided on a potential venue and agreed it with the Central Walk Coordinator it can be added to the annual programme. The Central Coordinator will approach the managers of the site to seek approval, and to ensure that it will not clash with any incompatible event at the venue e.g. music festival, cross country run or sponsored event.

The managers of the site will normally require a copy of our Risk assessment and Public Liability Insurance certificate (these will be provided by the Central Co-ordinator). Walk Leaders should familiarise themselves with the contents of the Risk Assessment as the Walk Leader they share responsibility for ensuring compliance.

The Central Coordinator will also add details to the facebook page as an event and inform the CSC website editor. They will also create the Registration form and start to collect details of participants; complete the Emergency contact form; and ensure CSC membership forms are available on the day.

4. PUBLICITY FOR THE WALK

Publicity for the walk is necessary to attract participants who are not members of the Clumber Spaniel Club or do not yet follow the Walking with Clumbers UK facebook page. In order to do this publicity will be necessary across social media, the local press and radio stations. Arranging this local publicity is normally shared between the Walk Coordinator (Social media, press) and the Walk Leader (Local Radio – as an on-air interview may be offered).

Normal contacts and time scales are:

- Local monthly publications and “pet” magazines may require to be notified two or three months in advance of the event,
- Entries on Social media pages such as Face book and sites such as “What’s on in” should be approached at least two months in advance Local papers and the County Tourist Office are also likely to have a “What’s On” page on their website
- Weekly newspaper and magazines may need to be notified two weeks in advance.
- Local Radio should be approached between a month and two weeks in advance to obtain a presence on their website and programmes
- A draft press release forms part of the Walk Leaders Pack

5. PLANNING THE ROUTE

Where possible the walk should be on way-marked or officially recognised paths and should offer relative easy walking suitable for children, elderly and Clumber owners with limited mobility. Where the landowner publishes walking routes suitable levels for a Clumber Walk might be graded as Easy, Leisurely or Moderate.

It is also recommended that the route avoids cycle tracks and bridleways and combined walking/cycling/riding tracks as it is very difficult to control a pack of Clumbers when cyclists or horses suddenly appear. It must be remembered that a group of people walking and talking may not be as alert to potential hazards around them as a person walking alone. If cycle routes etc are unavoidable, the walk marshals should act as “spotters” to warn the group of approaching bikes

If possible, the walk should include a river or lake that is accessible to dogs, both to provide a drink and an opportunity to get wet, swim and wash the mud off.

Where the route cannot avoid areas that are more hazardous, potential walkers must be warned of the hazards at the time they enrol on the walk.

It is recommended that the walk be planned to include a short cut back to the start from another point on the route, to allow those with a young or elderly dog to return to the car park after a short walk (See Kennel Club Advice on exercising puppies).

Leaders should pre-walk the route to assess suitability, identify hazards to ensure that they are covered by the risk assessment and identify the points of the walk where they will need to warn participants during the walk of hazards such as road crossings, stretches of road that the route follows, and cycle routes. Picnic areas and parts of the walk where there might be fishing should also be identified so that Leaders can provide clear instructions in advance of reaching a hazard or area where the dogs might cause a nuisance.

Walk Leaders should prepare a site map with the route, escape routes and any emergency locations marked and have at least two copies available on the day.

As mentioned above the Walk Leaders should pre-walk the route when deciding on a venue. If possible, there should be a second pre-walk, a few days before the event in case fresh hazards have been introduced and to identify where they will need to provide clear instructions to the walkers in advance of reaching hazards or areas where other visitors may be unhappy to be descended upon by a pack of Clumbers. These may include Roads, Cycle tracks, fishing pitches, picnic areas or busy paths.

About a week before the walk the Organiser and Leader should discuss the number of Marshals and appoint suitable people. The Walk Leader will normally lead from the front but additional Marshals should be appointed and issued with HI-Vis vests. One should take the role of backmarker at the rear of the party to check that nobody is left behind. If there are 15 or more walkers additional Marshals should be appointed and positioned approximately equidistance along the chain of walkers. For larger walks of 30-40 people, there should be at least five Marshals in addition to the Walk Leader.

Leaders should check the weather forecast in advance. Although these are only short walks, walkers are asked to ensure that they appropriately dressed for the elements e.g. warm waterproof clothing in cold/ wet weather.

6. LEADING THE WALK ON THE DAY

Leaders should arrive at the meeting point early to welcome and assist the walkers as they arrive. The Walk Coordinator or Leader should check the Register as people arrive and add the details of additional walkers. Non-members of the Clumber Spaniel Club should be asked to pay a fee of £1 unless they decide to join on the day. Attempts should be made to contact people Registered but not present using their mobile number in case they have been delayed.

The Leader and Marshals should try to introduce newcomers to as many other members of the group as possible as our walks are primarily a social event designed to bring Clumber owners together.

Two people should carry essential information on the walk. This would normally be the Walk Leader plus the Walks Coordinator or one of the Marshals. This information will include a map of the site with the route and short cuts marked; the emergency contact form; and the Walk register. In addition one will also have a copy of the risk assessment and insurance certificate.

Participants will have been advised that they should not bring a dog that has been in contact with infectious disease eg kennel cough or if they are suffering from an illness than may affect their ability

to complete the walk. Dogs with infectious disease must not participate. If the dog has what appears to be an infectious illness the handler must be asked to remove it and consult a vet.

The Walk Leader or Central Organiser should give a briefing at the start of the walk that includes introducing the Marshals, the procedures for managing the walk, emergency procedures and the role of the Marshals in “crowd control”. Participants should be asked to inform the leader if they intend to leave the walk while it is in progress.

Walkers should also be reminded to use waste bags to dispose of dog faeces or “stick and flick” where permitted; and that other members of the public can feel threatened by packs of dogs and stress the need to keep dogs under close control.

7. SUPERVISING THE WALK

Leaders should keep in touch with the back marker and any other Marshals. Regularly regroup the party at catch-up points along the route. The walk should not set off again until the Marshal acting as backmarker has confirmed that everyone has arrived at the stop.

Leaders should check in with the backmarker and Marshals at rest stops - ask them if they have noticed any problems or people who look like they are struggling. It is important to monitor the pace at which you are leading the walk. It is better to move at the pace of the slowest person than to continually stopping and starting because of waiting for people to catch up. If a dog appears to be injured or unwell, the leader must assess the problem and discuss suitable action with the handler.

Where there are a large number of participants (or some very slow walkers), it may be appropriate to split into smaller groups at one of the “regrouping” points. This will allow the composition of the mini-groups to be based on the walking speed for those taking part. Marshals, familiar with the route should be allocated to each mini-group.

Owners should be asked to put their dogs on lead in busy areas and when approaching picnic areas, people fishing, near livestock and in areas of high human and dog density. While responsibility for the control of dogs rests with the owner/handler it is the Clubs and the breed’s reputation that will be damaged if dogs upset other visitors

8. AND FINALLY AT THE END OF THE WALK

The Walk Leader should:

- Thank those attending, especially the Marshals
- Remind participants of upcoming events
- Ensure newcomers or non-members get some publicity material or are referred to the website
- Collect any Hi-vis jackets etc that have been issued
- Send Completed Registers/Walker lists, fees and membership forms and subscriptions collected to the Walk Coordinator if they have not attended the event.

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