



Best Friends 4-H Club  
**Canine Policy for Leaders and 4-H'ers**  
*Updated 4/7/2024/lsc*

**Introduction:** The American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen Program and Canine Therapy Department recognized Best Friends 4-H Club of Berrien County, Michigan as a certified canine therapy and dog competition organization registered with the State of Michigan 4-H since 2014. Best Friends 4-H Club firmly basis its canine therapy dog training programs and community services foundation on the American Kennel Club's Good Citizen and Therapy Dog Programs.

Best Friends 4-H Club is registered with Michigan State University Extension Office, Berrien County, Michigan, located at 1737 Hillandale Road; Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022-9630 (Phone: 269-927-5674 ext. 4015) as an inclusive Canine Therapy Dog Competition 4-H Club for the non-traditional and traditional 4H'er alike. Best Friends 4-H Club has been a Canine Therapy Dog Program since 1988.

## **SECTION 1: OWNERSHIP AND DEFINITIONS**

**Traditional (aka TR) 4H'er** – A TR 4H'er may train his or her own family canine upon the approval of the Best Friends 4-H Club's coordinators. If the canine has been found to be more than the 4H'er can handle, an adult will be assigned to the TR 4H'er to assist with the training until the team can be trusted to work together safely. The TR 4H'er's Summer Dog Training Project's goal is to train with his or her canine and compete in the Berrien County Youth Fair's Traditional Dog Events. The TR 4H'er's yearly canine goals will be to assist with community service canine projects, the completion of all 4-H canine projects, and participate in the Best Friends 4-H Club's community service programs including supervised visits with his or her canine.

**Non-Traditional (aka NTR) 4H'er** – A NTR 4H'er may train his or her own family canine upon the approval of the Best Friends 4-H Club's coordinators but will be teamed up with a Team Instructor to assist with the training and safety of both the child and dog. Should the NTR 4H'er not own a family canine, he or she will be assigned a volunteer team canine to train and bond with during the summer dog project. The NTR 4H'er's Summer Dog Training Project's goal is to train with his or her canine and compete in the Berrien County Youth Fair's Non-Traditional Dog Events. The NTR 4H'er's yearly canine goals will be to assist with community service canine projects, the completion of all 4-H canine projects, and participate in the Best Friends 4-H Club's community service programs including supervised visits with his or her canine.

**Volunteer Team Canine (aka VTC)** – A Volunteer Team Canine is a canine that has been temperament tested prior to joining Best Friends 4-H Club, and has passed, or is training to pass, the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Test. A volunteer team canine's purpose is to be paired with a NTR 4H'er and the canine's owner (who is a registered 4-H leader) for the Best Friends 4-H Club Summer Dog Project with a goal of competing in the Berrien County Youth Fair's Non-Traditional Dog Events and community service programs.



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**SECTION 2: CANINE REGISTRATION**

1. **Registration – CANINE REGISTRATION MUST BE RENEWED YEARLY.**
2. **Due Dates –**
  - a. **Year-Round Canine Therapy Projects** – If your dog is in the Best Friends year-round dog projects and community service programs, your canine registration is due by **December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.**
  - b. **4H'ers Summer Dog Projects** – If your dog is in Best Friends Summer Dog Project only, your canine registration is due by **June 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.**
3. **Registration Form** – Each canine owner must complete a yearly Best Friends 4-H Club Canine Registration Form for each dog who is a member of the club. The yearly registration will cover the following ...
  - a. Best Friends 4-H Club's Liability Insurance
  - b. Berrien County Youth Fair's Dog Registration
  - c. American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen and Therapy Dog titles
4. **Canine Photographs** – Each canine registration must be accompanied with two photographs of the canine being registered. Those photos will be
  - a. One clear view of the face and head.
  - b. One clear view of the canine's body sideways in stacking position.
5. **Purpose of Canine Photographs** - These photos will be utilized for the purposes of
  - a. Berrien County Youth Fair's registration for dog events
  - b. Registering for the American Kennel Club's Therapy Dog titles
  - c. Best Friends 4-H Club's Canine's Membership Card for canine therapy visits.

**SECTION 3: CANINE IMMUNIZATIONS**

1. **Canine must be up to date with his or her immunizations.**
2. **IMMUNIZATIONS REQUIRED** – The canine must be current with the following immunizations
  - a. **Rabies (Three year acceptable)**
  - b. **Distemper, Hepatitis and Parvovirus (Three year acceptable)**
  - c. **Bordetella – Must be given yearly. (FYI: This is Whooping Cough in humans.)**
  - d. Canine Influenza (Recommended but not necessary)
  - e. Leptospirosis (Recommended but not necessary)
  - f. Lyme's (Recommended but not necessary)
3. **Immunization Time Frame** – Canine immunizations **must be administered on or before June 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.**
4. **Proof of Immunizations** – Canine immunizations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian and valid proof must be provided. A signed certificate from the veterinarian will be accepted.

**SECTION 4: BODY HARNESS REQUIREMENTS**

Should your canine require a body harness for training and competition, your veterinarian must provide a diagnosis on the canine registration form. *Example: Neck trauma issues.*





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**SECTION 5: CANINE MEMBERSHIP IDENTIFICATION – DOG BADGES**

1. All leaders who have completed his or her canine registration, accompanied with the proper photographs and have paid his or her yearly dues of ten dollars (\$10.00), and who are participating in the Leader's Year-Round Canine Therapy Dog Projects, will receive a Best Friends 4-H Club Canine Registration and Membership ID Badge.
2. The badge will carry a photograph of the canine's head on it.
3. Canine and/or owner will wear the badge to his or her assigned canine therapy projects and events.

**SECTION 6: OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Temperament Testing** – Canine must be temperament tested by the Best Friends 4-H Club coordinators prior to joining the club's canine therapy programs.
2. **Canine Behavior** – Owner of canine fully comprehends, and with his or her signature on the Canine Registration Form, agrees to full responsibility for his or her canine's behavior and actions. The owner understands that should the his or her canine display behavior that is unsuitable for the safety of another animal and/or human being, said behavior would constitute an immediate dismissal from the club and removal from the grounds.
3. **Canine Grooming** – Owner understands and agrees to have his or her canine "immaculately groomed according to breed standards or the breed standards the dog resembles the most" for all canine events, competitions and therapy visits. The owner may have a 4H'er assist him or her with the grooming as a dog project.
4. **Transportation** – Owner is responsible for the transportation of the canine to and from the dog project sites and canine therapy projects.
5. **Remaining with the Canine on the Premises** – Owner will remain on the premises until the practice session and/or canine therapy event has been completed.
6. **Canine Training Equipment** – Depending upon the dog training class, canine therapy event or dog competition, the owner agrees to provide the following dog training equipment for his or her TR or NTR 4H'er.
  - a. One tagless buckle or clip dog collar
  - b. One tagless Snap (Volhard) or Martingale obedience collar
  - c. One dog body harness (if prescribed by the veterinarian)
  - d. One four-foot leash
  - e. One six-foot leash
  - f. One Jr. Showmanship leash
  - g. One Jr. Showmanship collar
  - h. One jug of water
  - i. One dog bowl
  - j. One hand towel
  - k. Four to six poop bags
  - l. One spray bottle of disinfectant for accidents
  - m. One roll of paper towel
  - n. One tote to carry dog supplies in

**SECTION 7: BITCH IN SEASON**

A bitch in season (*menstruation*) will not participate in canine training class, not make canine therapy visits for the understandable reasons.



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**SECTION 8: RESERVE CANINE**

Should the 4H'er's canine become unavailable for a training class, an event or a dog competition for understandable reasons, a reserve canine may be substituted for the day.

**SECTION 9: PAIRING OF NTR 4H'ER WITH A TEAM INSTRUCTOR AND VOLUNTEER TEAM CANINE**

Best Friends 4-H Club coordinators will have the final decisions as to which NTR 4H'er will be paired with which Team Instructor and Volunteer Team Canine.

**SECTION 10: CANINE SOCIAL TRAINING**

1. **Dog Obedience Class** - During the fall and winter, Best Friends 4-H Club leaders offers eight-week dog obedience classes at Muttlerly Love with no cost to the 4-H leader and/or 4H'er. Dog Obedience classes are mandatory for all new leaders and new dogs as the class lessons assist the club leaders with canine temperament observations and testing in the social environment.
2. **Rally, Scent Work and Conformation Practice** - The Berrien Kennel Club and Best Friends 4-H Club offers practice sessions in Rally, Scent Work and Conformation every Tuesday should you wish to get more experience in these areas.
3. **Jr. Showmanship Class** - On the first Monday in March, Best Friends 4-H Club offers a seven-week class in Jr. Showmanship (Breed Conformation) with a Dress Rehearsal on the seventh class.

**SECTION 11: CANINE TEMPERAMENT TESTING**

1. Prior to becoming a Best Friends 4-H Club volunteer team canine, the dog must undergo an American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Test for temperament evaluation.
2. As the test is a "Pass" or "Needs Training" test, should the canine miss one or two of the exercises that will not cause harm to a child, a adult and/or another animal, (*Example: dog won't sit and stay, or hesitantly walks through a crowd with other dogs*) the canine may still be paired with an NTR 4H'er and the summer dog training project goal will be to address these training areas.
3. The canine will be given every opportunity to earn and/or renew his or her AKC Canine Good Citizen title every year with the club.

**SECTION 12: AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB REGISTRY**

All Best Friends 4-H Club canines have the opportunity to obtain the American Kennel Club titles through the club (*see section 12*). In order to obtain the AKC titles, the canine must be registered with and have a registry number from the American Kennel Club. This registry number can be obtained in one of three ways. (*Remember: The main reason to register your dog with AKC is to get its name permanently in the history books telling the world of all its hard-earned accomplishments.*) Those registries are ...

1. **American Kennel Club Registration** - This registration is the number you will receive from registering a purebred dog - the breeder will give you the "papers." Purebred dogs have a pedigree that goes back generations. There are two types of AKC registration:





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- a. **Full Registration** – The breeder is giving you full breeding rights for this dog or bitch.
- b. **Limited Registration** – Puppies whelped from this dog or bitch cannot be register with AKC.
2. **Purebred Alternative Listing (PAL)** – This registration is for purebred dogs to get a registration number so they can participate in activities and earn performance titles. The parents and history (*grandparents, siblings, etc.*) of these dogs may not be known (*such as if the dog came from a rescue or shelter*) so the dog **must be spayed or neutered to get to receive a PAL registered number.**
3. **Canine Partner** – This registration is for any dog; purebred or mixed breed. The dog **must be spayed or neutered to get to receive a Canine Partner registered number.**

If you wish to earn these titles and want to register your canine with the American Kennel Club, please go to <http://www.akc.org/register/dog/>.

**SECTION 13: TEMPERAMENT CERTIFICATES, TITLES AND GOALS**

Best Friends 4-H Club leaders assist in giving every opportunity for 4H'ers and leaders to acquire his or her AKC Canine Good Citizen titles and Therapy Dog titles. Those same titles will depend upon the age and the training of the canine.

1. **By the Age of Twelve Months** – The canine may have acquired an American Kennel Club Socialization, Training, Activity and Responsible Owner (S.T.A.R.) Certificate.
2. **By the Age of Thirty-Six Months** – The canine must have acquired, or within the next nine months of registration with Best Friends 4-H Club, will be testing for one and/or all of the following American Kennel Club's temperament test and titles:
  - a. AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) title.
  - b. AKC Community Canine (CGCA) title.
  - c. AKC Urban Canine Good Citizen (CGCU) title.
3. **By the Age of Nine Years** – The canine may acquire the following American Kennel Club Therapy Dog titles:
  - a. AKC Therapy Dog Novice (THDN) title (*10 canine therapy visits*).
  - b. AKC Therapy Dog (THD) title (*50 canine therapy visits*).
  - c. AKC Therapy Dog Advanced (THDA) title (*100 canine therapy visits*).
  - d. AKC Therapy Dog Excellent (THDX) title (*200 canine therapy visits*).
  - e. AKC Therapy Dog Distinguished (THDD) title (*400 canine therapy visits*).
  - f. AKC Therapy Dog Supreme (THDS) title (*600 canine therapy visits*).