

Social Media Guidance notes

1. Our foremost guidance in respect of social media issues is to take a robust line and policy of non-engagement or response. There is a balance in doing so and monitoring traction and momentum on any contentious issue.
We can understand that social media outpourings can be distressing.
2. Social media can act as an echo chamber and give traction and momentum way beyond the context of the original issue. It can cause disproportionate distress and unintended consequences to all those involved. To compound or exacerbate the distress of any such incident is unnecessary. Sometimes those using social media will express some rather forthright observations about others and it can present an uneven playing field when Facebook is used sometimes for one sided publication of opinion comment and observation. However, the option and opportunity exists for people to do this. It is difficult to legislate and enforce against opinions being expressed and it remains our advice that it is better not to read, engage or react to this sort of material as this does run the risk of prolonging and given oxygen for the matter to continue.
3. The Kennel Club generally has a limited remit or authority to censor material, or to censure those involved. When possible, we will call out social media engagement which is beyond the threshold of reasonable and respectful engagement, but that must address issues arising from inappropriate behaviour at licensed events, or else social media activity connected with the same. In terms of determining how we can intervene, we have to consider a complaint based on factors such as *Threshold*, *Context*, *Impact* and *Remit*, and this may also include the following:
 - The extreme nature of language used
 - Threatening, bullying, discriminatory or intimidating language
 - The tone and tenor of the posting
 - Whether the social media engagement was a one-off aberration or prolific (habitual) activity
 - Impact on an individual
 - Impact on Kennel Club licensed events
4. If the matters complained of were to constitute defamation, then this would be a private and personal matter and would require legal advice and assistance rather than something upon which the Kennel Club could intervene on your behalf. Matters involving integrity and reputation involve personal issues which may require private remedies such as are to be found in the courts. The Kennel Club disciplinary process could not assist in this context as it is not appropriate to channel personal issues through a disciplinary process which requires there to be a wider impact upon the interests of the canine world. In any event there are no powers to order injunctive relief nor compensatory measures for redress and damages such as a court may order.
5. The Kennel Club's guidance to anyone who finds him or herself targeted, or the subject of abuse through social media is to ignore such material and not to read, respond or engage in the conversation.

6. If you engage in a 'toxic' conversation and environment – then this is likely to perpetuate the matter. Even with social media 'crises' affecting companies the view many reach is that it is not productive to even attempt to manage/respond/react to a challenge because it is notoriously difficult to control or manage. It will usually exacerbate and fuel matters and perpetuate the issue. Unless the content becomes more extreme or offensive – then silence may be the better counsel and course of action here.

