Good Dogs of America Merit Badge Program

Oklahoma 4-H is now implementing the Good Dogs of America merit badge program. This program is a way in which 4-H volunteer club leaders can encourage 4-H members to spend time training and building positive relationships with their dogs. In order to receive badges 4-H members must demonstrate to their 4-H dog club leader that they have mastered the minimum criteria for each badge.

Upon completion of the criteria the volunteer club leader may order badges from the State 4-H Office. The badges are iron-on and may be attached to the Good Dogs of America bandana that is also available from the State 4-H Office (comes with a 4-H badge).

Criteria

Reliability - behaviors should be performed successfully at least 4 out of 5 times.

Cues – the command for a dog to perform a behavior. Cues may verbal or hand/body signals and the behavior should be performed on the first cue and in most cases with no repetitions such as, sit, sit, sit. Additionally, hand and body signals should not be extreme. For example, when using a hand signal to cue a down the handler may use a downward motion with his arm but should not lower his arm all the way to the ground so that it looks like he is luring the dog down.

Discrimination – understanding the difference between cues. Sit and down should be the first badges a member earns and then all tests should include some sits and some downs intermingled with the behavior you are testing. For example, if a dog and handler practice “play dead” 100 times in a row before the test, he may very well offer you a “play dead” even if you ask for a “sit.” To properly test the “play dead” cue, you should first successfully cue a “down” and/or a “sit” before giving the cue, “play dead.” Be sure to mix up the cues a little as dogs become very good at recognizing patterns (sit→down→dead→sit).
Distractions – to be determined by the volunteer club leader because what is enticing and distracting for one dog may be of no interest to another dog. Distractions should show true impulse control but not be so distracting that it would be unrealistic to expect most dogs to accomplish the task. Distractions may be food on the floor that is located a few feet away, a dog walking by, someone on the other side of the room bouncing a ball, etc…

1. Stay – handler may place the dog in either a sit or down and the dog must maintain a stay in the chosen position for at least 30 seconds from a distance of at least 6 feet and with a minimum of one distraction (food or toy).
2. Sit – dog must sit and maintain the sit for at least 3 seconds.
3. Shake – dog must offer a shake when cued and must be willing to offer both paws. Note - shake should not be one of the dog’s earlier behaviors to learn as it can create problems with pawing if the dog has not yet learned good cue discrimination.
4. Play Dead – dog must offer on first cue and maintain for a minimum of 5 seconds.
5. Wait – demonstrated at a doorway, the handler cues the dog to wait and then passes through the door, after exiting the door the handler then releases the dog to come through the door. Once released, the dog must not dash off but should keep its attention focused on the handler and be willing to offer a sit or down when asked.
6. Heel – dog must complete a heeling pattern requiring a halt, change of pace, left and right turns.
7. Drop It – the dog must pick up an item and then drop it on cue. The item must be of high value that the dog desires but is large enough the dog cannot swallow it such as a rawhide bone or favorite toy. * Earning this badge should not be attempted with dogs that are resource guarders.
8. Come – should be performed at a minimum of 20 ft from different positions and with some distractions.
9. Down – dogs elbows must come in contact with the ground and the down must be maintained for at least 3 seconds.
10. Let’s Go – should be demonstrated outside of normal training area such as at a city sidewalk. Determine a reasonable distance such as to the end of the block and return. The dog does not have to place all of his focus on the handler but must not pull or be drug by the leash. The handler may speak to the dog offering verbal praise but should not pull the leash to bring the dog back into position more than once.
11. Place – on cue the dog should move to a desired location (ex. mat or bed) at least 5 feet away and the dog should stay for at least 30 seconds and not leave until the handler releases it.
12. Leave It – dog and handler must walk through a course with several high value items (treat and/or toys) for the dog without the dog picking up any of the items. The dog and handler should walk through the area close enough to the items that the dog can easily get to the items. Handler should walk the dog in a manner that the dog is between the handler and items. The handler may repeat the command to “leave it” as often as necessary but must not pull the dog away.
13. Off – dog must show that it will get “off” of an item when cued. This may not be an appropriate badge for all dogs because many dogs are taught “off” as a default behavior (not on cue) as they are never allowed up on couch, lap, or etc.

14. House Broken – member indicates to the club leader that they have not had any accidents for at least 1 month.

15. Grooming – the dog should look well groomed and the evaluator should be able to inspect the eyes, ears, all 4 paws and run a hand or brush through the dog’s fur while the dog remains calm.

16. Polite Greeting – the handler and dog come up to the evaluator and the dog sits next to the handler, the evaluator then greets the handler and shakes their hand while asking if he or she may pet the dog. Then, the evaluator lets the dog sniff their hand and pats the dog on the chest. The dog should remain calm and in the sit position. * Please note that the picture on the patch has a person in the dog’s face, this is not a safe way to approach any dog and you should remind your 4-H members to avoid placing their faces near a dog’s head.

17. Gentle – this should be an non-cued (default) behavior that the dog exhibits all the time. When providing the dog a high-value treat, he should take it gently without mugging your hand.

18. Sharing – the “drop it” cue should be a prerequisite to this behavior. The dog should take an item and “drop it” (on the floor or in the hand) when cued. Then, the handler must be able to pick up the item without distressing the dog. The handler may trade the dog for another object. * Earning this badge should not be attempted with dogs that are resource guarders. The picture on this badge has a child on the floor taking an object from the dog, which is not an appropriate way to test this behavior.

19. Dog Social – this behavior is tested on lead, two handlers walk their dogs up to one another, greet and shake hands and then lead their dogs away from one another. The dogs do not have to interact with one another, as some dogs require more space than others do.

Not all dogs are suited to meet the requirements of each badge, leaders and owners should not put the dog in a situation that makes their dog feel frightened and/or aggressive. The purpose of the program is not winning awards but building positive relationships between 4-H members and their dogs.
Order Form

County __________________ 4-H Leader ________________

4-H Leader Phone Number ____________________________

Bandanas

Each bandana includes a 4-H patch.

Petite Bandana fits neck size 6” – 9” ______

Small Bandana fits neck size 10” – 16” ______

Medium-Large fits neck size 17” – 24” ______

Badges

Please indicate the desired quantities of each item on the line next to the badge.

Number of bandanas ______ x $10.00 = ____________

Number of badges ______ X $3.00 = ____________

Balance Due $ ____________

Payment is due upon receipt.

Please make checks payable: Oklahoma 4-H Foundation

Mail to: Steve Beck, Oklahoma 4-H, 205 4H Youth Development, Stillwater, OK 74078

Typically orders will not be mailed but arrangements will be made to get them delivered to your county extension office.

For office use only

*Companion Animals Acct D-15

Date Received: ________________

Amount Paid: ______________

Check #: ________________