



HOW TO PITCH “AKC RDO DAY” AS A NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL TOPIC

As a non-profit organization, your club can “pitch” an opinion to the editorial editor or staff at your local newspaper about responsible dog ownership. This is a promising angle to pitch, especially if there has been recent news in your community about breed-specific legislation, dog bites or irresponsible commercial breeders. Use the American Kennel Club Responsible Dog Ownership Day (AKC® RDO Day) as the platform, with your club and its local event as the tie-in to your community.

Call your local paper and find out who writes the editorials. At a small paper, it may be just one person while at larger dailies a “board” may hear your point of view and then decide whether or not the paper wants to promote that position or event.

Before pitching to an editorial board or writer, be prepared to explain why they should consider supporting responsible dog ownership and your AKC RDO Day event by highlighting the following:

- AKC RDO Day is an annual event, educating the public about dogs in an engaging and entertaining way
- Rise of canine legislation – discuss issues that threaten dog ownership (banned breeds, crop/dock ban, ownership vs. guardian) and how education is more important than ever
- Increase in breed-specific legislation (BSL) – discuss BSL as the fault of an irresponsible owner and not the breed of dog
- Safety around dogs – because the majority of dog bites happen to children, it is important to teach them how to safely behave around dogs
- Showcase the positive ways in which your club contributes to the community:
 - Volunteers time and energy toward educating the public about responsible dog ownership all year long (Canine Ambassadors, Public Education Coordinators)
 - Raises/donates money for necessary items such as a K-9 police vest or pooper-scoopers for dog runs/park, etc.
 - Holds dogs shows that boost the local economy

Bring supporting materials to the meeting:

- AKC talking points (located in the *Spreading the Word: PR Tips and Tools* binder)
- AKC RDO Day brochure (included in the AKC RDO Day club kit)
- Sample opinion editorial or “Op-Ed” piece (see sample)
- Club fact sheet including:
 - brief history of the club

- donations made
- volunteer work
- all other activities that enhance responsible dog ownership
- Attach media clips and coverage about your club from local outlets - TV, radio, newspapers

There are several possible outcomes from the editorial board meeting:

1. **The newspaper decides to write an editorial. Celebrate!**
2. **The newspaper decides not to write an editorial.** If so, offer your own “Op-Ed” piece. Add your name or “byline” under the title and include at the end of the article a line about yourself in italics: *(YOUR NAME) is the (TITLE) of the (CLUB NAME) and is a (insert some fact that denotes expert status, such as “longtime breeder,” “exhibitor,” “owner,” etc.)*
3. **The newspaper declines your offer of an “Op-Ed.”** If so, submit a “Letter to the Editor” (see sample). Follow the submission guidelines published by the newspaper, put on your club letterhead and sign it with your name, club title, club name, web site (if appropriate) and phone number. Please note that this is not a guaranteed placement.

Both sample documents are available as PDF files on the AKC web site at:

<http://www.akc.org/clubs/rdod/index.cfm>. To create a Word document from the PDF file (you cannot make changes to the PDF document) click the “Edit” drop down menu, click “Select All” (to copy the text), click “Copy” then open a blank Word document and click “Paste.” Feel free to use the wording as is, or edit for your club’s needs.

If your local newspaper writes its own editorial or publishes your opinion editorial or letter to the editor, please forward a copy to AKC Club Communications at the address below so we can share your success story with other clubs.

Note that you can use your club’s AKC RDO Day event to fulfill one of your requirements for a “public educational program” on your club’s annual event application. Attach the newspaper clipping of the editorial or letter to the editor to the event application as part of your club’s documentation that you held an AKC RDO Day as a “public educational program.”

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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