



National Lupine Association

Code of Ethics: Wolfdog Owners

Codes of ethics are the principles of conduct governing an individual or group. The following acrostic outlines the NLA's minimum principles of conduct governing wolfdog owners. NLA recommends that these principles be considered by its membership as essential conduct for responsible wolfdog owners.

E for Education. Education is crucial for wolfdog owners. Knowledge of wolfdogs' characteristics and behaviors allows you to understand your animal better and, in turn, become a better owner. Learn about wolf and dog behavior both from reading and from studying your animal. Wolfdog bans are sweeping the country, so you should educate yourself on state and local laws governing wolfdog ownership and remember that you represent all wolfdog owners (*i.e.*, you can have a powerful positive or negative impact on the opinion of others—and even affect future legislation concerning wolfdogs).

T for Training. Training your animal goes hand in hand with education. Train your wolfdog, yourself, and others. Train your wolfdog to be gentle, discourage aggression, and endeavor to teach it basic obedience using positive reinforcement. Train yourself on how to answer questions about wolfdogs, even from people who are hostile about you owning a “wild animal.” Train others how to interact with your animal, especially children; do not allow anyone to approach your animal without your permission. Good training can protect you and your animal and can prevent a lot of heartache.

H for Husbandry. Responsible wolfdog owners always provide appropriate care for their animals. Provide necessary veterinary/health care; aside from annual vaccinations, protect your wolfdog from heartworms, intestinal worms, fleas and ticks, etc. Feed a diet suitable for wolfdogs in general (avoid corn and soy in kibble), as well as for your animal's individual needs (senior, puppy, etc.); supply clean water at all times. Make sure your wolfdog gets plenty of exercise and playtime. Because wolfdogs are highly social animals, provide sufficient companionship for your wolfdog; this can be accomplished by spending quality time with your wolfdog, by making sure it has another canine companion or, preferably, by doing both.

I for Integrity. NEVER use your wolfdog for illegal acts (*e.g.*, dog fighting, bestiality, etc.) or abandon it by turning it out to fend for itself. Expediently compensate for any damages your animal causes to someone else's personal property. Keep informed of your local and state ordinances and make every effort to abide by them. Conduct yourself in a way that always reflects positively on wolfdogs.

C for Containment. Appropriate containment is crucial. Tethering should only be used temporarily and only under direct supervision; tethering promotes aggression and allows for easy access to your animal. Invisible fencing and shock collars are discouraged as a means of containment; they typically fail to contain wolfdogs and also allow for easy access to the animal. Chain link fencing, dig wire, perimeter fencing, cattle panels, and hot wire are all viable tools in containing your animal. The degree of complexity of your enclosure ultimately depends upon the individual animal. Appropriate containment should keep your wolfdog from getting out and should keep others (humans, children, other dogs, etc.) from getting in.

S for Socialization. Wolfdogs are social, “pack-oriented” animals. As such, they require companionship from their owners or from another canine, or both. Because wolfdogs are part “wolf,” you need to take special care that they are sufficiently socialized. Start your animal's socialization as young as possible by introducing it to new people and new stimuli. This will help when you need to take your animal to the vet or elsewhere. A well-socialized wolfdog is much easier to handle than an unsocialized wolfdog.

Code of Ethics: NLA Members

This "Member Code of Ethics" is established for members of NLA, whose first and foremost goal should be the welfare of wolfdogs. These ethics are set forth as minimum principles to which NLA asks members to adhere.

As an NLA member, I will

1. Represent myself ethically and will treat my animals humanely.
2. Be truthful in all statements regarding wolfdogs, including the representation of my animals; I will not falsely advertise or make false claims about my animals nor falsely mislead in advertisements.
3. Not only adhere to the NLA Member Code of Ethics, but I will also abide by all NLA Codes of Ethics that apply to me (*i.e.*, Breeder, Rescuer, and/or Wolfdog Owner Code of Ethics).
4. Respect other members of NLA and will not misuse any personal information about individuals or their animals that I obtain through my participation in NLA or its events.
5. Behave respectfully within the wolfdog community and will not publicly or privately spread gossip about or act maliciously toward other wolfdog owners or any member of NLA.
6. Provide safe, humane containment for my animals, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - fencing sufficient to properly and adequately contain my animal;
 - shelter sufficient for my animal to comfortably escape from the elements (*i.e.*, sun, rain, etc.);
 - a containment area that allows my animal to run/exercise; if my animal must be permanently housed inside or in a small kennel that prohibits running, I will walk my animal regularly or provide an exercise area and/or enrichment items that allow my animal to exercise/play;
 - tethering will never be used as a primary means of containment because of its propensity to create aggression and the increased likelihood of people, especially children, gaining access to the animal;
 - invisible fencing will never be used as a means of containment because of the high probability of escape and the likelihood of people, especially children, gaining access to the animal.
7. Maintain excellence in animal husbandry, including, but not limited to, appropriate shade, clean water, proper health care, sufficient companionship (human or canine), adequate exercise, healthy food, safe containment, etc.
8. Keep abreast of my local and state laws pertaining to the keeping and/or breeding of wolfdogs.
9. Never exceed the number of animals that I can afford to maintain or legally keep in my area.
10. Never use NLA in any advertising or for any personal or commercial reasons and/or gain.
11. Never act in a manner that may bring harm to the reputation of NLA or any of its members.

Membership in NLA may be refused/revoked based on, but not limited to, the following:

1. Any animal cruelty or neglect conviction, or repeated allegations (from multiple sources) of such improper conduct regarding any animal.
2. Support of or participation in zoophilia or any act of bestiality.
3. Blatant disregard for or refusal to adhere to the pertinent codes of ethics, bylaws, directives, and/or policies set forth by NLA and/or promoted by the NLA Board of Directors.
4. Significant disruption to the smooth operation of NLA, including, but not limited to, actions online, at the annual NLA Rendezvous, etc.
5. Willfully jeopardizing the life, safety, and/or well-being of any animal and/or person—such as exposing people to an aggressive animal or one known to bite without taking proper safety precautions; refusing NLA's request to sequester/remove an animal from the Rendezvous based upon safety concerns.
6. Unbecoming conduct online: Attacking, threatening, or bashing NLA members and/or wolfdog owners.
7. The NLA Board of Directors' belief that an applicant or member is detrimental to or fails to act in the best interest of wolfdogs, NLA, and/or its membership.

Code of Ethics: Wolfdog Breeding

NLA adopts and promotes the following “Breeder Code of Ethics” as the minimum requirements for the responsible breeding of wolfdogs. These ethics apply to all (members and non-members) who breed, even if it is only one litter.

When responsibly breeding my own animals, I will

1. Use only northern-breed or lupine-type dogs/wolfdogs (as are deemed acceptable) as breeding stock: German Shepherd, Malamute, Husky or a verifiable combination therein.
2. Breed non-aggressive animals of sound temperament. Aggressive or unsound (*e.g.*, extremely skittish, etc.) animals will be removed from breeding stock (even if purchased as a breeding animal) and spayed/neutered to ensure that no accidental breeding will take place.
3. Never breed animals with a known or debilitating/life-threatening genetic defect that would or could affect future offspring. Such animals will be removed from the breeding stock and spayed/neutered.
4. Provide the buyer with a written breeder-buyer contract that is inclusive of NLA's Breeder Code of Ethics and covers, at a minimum but not limited to, the following:
 - a guarantee that the breeding pair and the offspring are free of any known genetic or debilitating/life-threatening defects;
 - an outline of proper husbandry requirements (*i.e.*, feeding, containment, housing, veterinary care, training, socialization, etc.);
 - a health guarantee and a veterinary-certified health certificate, verifying that the animal is healthy and free of illness/defect (as far as the breeder is aware) and that the animal is up to date on required vaccinations and wormings; the health certificate should accompany the contract at the time of sale/transfer of pup from breeder to buyer;
 - a return/replacement policy should the animal be diagnosed (by a licensed veterinarian) with a genetic or debilitating/life-threatening defect within two years of the whelp date;
 - a stipulation for the right of return (*i.e.*, the breeder is notified first if, for any reason, the owner cannot keep the animal);
 - a spay/neuter clause for pups sold that are obviously pet quality rather than breeding quality animals; and
 - an agreement that breeder and buyer maintain contact (buyer will make at least one annual check-up call; if buyer or breeder moves /changes numbers, he/she will notify the other party.
5. Perform basic health testing to determine the breeding animal is sound and carries no genetic issues that could affect offspring. (*NOTE: Test results should accompany—not be used in lieu of—a contract.*)
6. Provide accurate and verifiable pedigree information about their breeding animals: lineage, wolf and dog contents/percentages, etc. If verifiable information does not exist, the breeder will inform the buyer that the lineage and percentages of the parents are NOT verified. (*NOTE: A responsible wolfdog breeder will never engage in false or misleading advertising, including, but not limited to, providing a specific percentage for the animal when that percentage cannot be verified as outlined above.*)

When responsibly breeding outside my own kennel, I will

1. Abide by the aforementioned requirements, in addition to those outlined in this section.
2. Provide the other breeder with a breeder-breeder contract that outlines the conditions of the breeding: fees, placement of pups, pick of the litter, transportation, veterinarian treatments/fees, genetic testing, animal husbandry, etc. The breeder-breeder contract should also include information about a refund or a repeat service and the conditions for such a service if the breeding fails to yield viable offspring, viable offspring failed to make it to term or were stillborn, etc.

3. Verify that the other breeding animal (1) is a lupine-type animal or northern breed dog (as outlined in #1 in the first section) or a verified wolfdog (as outlined in #6 in the first section); (2) is of sound temperament (*e.g.*, is not aggressive/extremely shy); and (3) is genetically sound (through testing as outlined in #5 in the first section.).
4. Refuse to engage in breeding services if (1) an animal fails to meet any of the items outlined in the NLA Breeder Code of Ethics or (2) a breeder is known to be a puppy miller, a wholesaler, an unethical breeder, a zoophile, or an individual convicted of animal abuse.

When responsibly selling any animal (pup, yearling or adult), I will

1. Refuse to sell to (or recommend) any of the following:
 - an unethical or irresponsible owner or breeder;
 - a wholesaler, puppy miller, collector, or broker;
 - a prospective owner who lacks proper containment; and/or
 - a prospective owner who is unable to provide the proper care (*e.g.*, the buyer doesn't have a stable income, already has too many animals to properly care for, etc.).
2. Provide the buyer with a breeder-buyer contract that includes, but is not limited to, the information outlined in #4 in the first section.
3. Reclaim, or assist in the placement of, any pup that the breeder produces and that the buyer must relinquish at any time during the animal's life.
4. Provide the buyer with the animal's lineage going back a minimum of three generations. If the pedigree is unverified, the buyer will be made aware of that fact.
5. Provide all necessary health care to the animal prior to selling it; maintain accurate health records of all animals and litters, disclosing all relevant health records, health/medical issues, and/or medical treatments of the litter, dam, and/or sire to all buyers.
6. Encourage buyers to have their new animals examined by a licensed veterinarian and continue with any necessary medical treatments (*i.e.*, continued vaccinations or other treatments). Buyers should make the results known to breeders for the mutual protection of all: buyers, breeders, and animals.

In all cases, and in addition to the items above, as a responsible wolfdog breeder, I will

1. Maintain excellence in the husbandry of my animals in accordance with the ethics set forth by NLA, including, but not limited to, providing appropriate shade, proper health care, clean water, sufficient companionship (human or canine), adequate exercise, healthy food, safe containment, etc. (***NOTE:*** *Tethering and invisible fencing are neither safe nor humane forms of containment (1) because of the propensity to create aggression with the former and the high probability of escape with the latter, and (2) because, with both, there is an increased likelihood of people, especially children, gaining access to the animal and getting bitten.*)
2. Never exceed the number of animals that I can afford to maintain in accordance with the ethics set forth by NLA.
3. Ensure that I have sufficient time and resources to socialize the pups I produce and sell; if I do not have the time or the finances to socialize the pups, I will not breed.
4. Ensure that sufficient buyers are lined up before breeding any animals; if I do not have a sufficient or reasonable number of buyers lined up before the breeding takes place, I will delay breeding until the following year.
5. Verify that all buyers are able to obtain veterinary services from a qualified veterinarian that will treat wolfdogs.
6. Seek appropriate references from all prospective buyers.
7. Perform (or have someone perform) home checks on all buyers.
8. Never use the NLA name or claim NLA endorsement for any breeding or advertising purposes.

Code of Ethics: Wolfdog Rescue

NLA sets forth the following “Rescuer Code of Ethics” as minimum principles and standards for responsible wolfdog rescue. These ethics apply to all individuals (members and non-members) who engage in rescue.

I understand that rescuers represent the wolfdog community as a whole; therefore, as a responsible wolfdog rescuer, I will

1. Portray the highest moral character and promote a favorable image of myself and wolfdogs to local agencies, colleagues, and the general public.
2. Combat myths and rumors with real knowledge by having a fundamental understanding of laws, medical/health issues, husbandry needs, and training basics as they apply to wolfdogs.

As a responsible wolfdog rescuer, I will evaluate my ability to perform rescues by determining if I

1. Have sufficient time to devote to rescuing an animal.
2. Am prepared and knowledgeable enough for handling the extremes of canine personalities.
3. Can provide a suitable place for safely/securely housing rescues that complies with state and local health and animal ordinances.
4. Have sufficient financial resources to maintain and provide long-term/serious medical care should it be required. (*NOTE: A veterinarian that understands wolfdogs and supports rescuers is a valuable asset.*)

When responsibly rescuing or facilitating the rescue of a wolfdog, I will

1. Interview the owner of the animal in person and/or via the phone before taking possession of the animal. (Initial contact may be via the internet, but rescuers should speak to the owner, as well.)
2. Provide suggestions and discuss available options honestly with the past and/or future owner.
3. Make every attempt to help the owner keep the animal in its current home. If home environment and conditions are not serious issues, then I will endeavor to work with the owner to educate them and/or obtain assistance for them to resolve problems and avoid surrender of the wolfdog.
4. Obtain a full background on the animal (if possible), including, but not limited to
 - name, gender, and date of birth;
 - medical history, including copies of all veterinary records;
 - wolf percentage and/or wolf and dog content;
 - socialization and training extent/history;
 - level of exposure to and tolerance of strangers, children, other animals, etc.;
 - primary means of containment required;
 - breeder’s name and contact information (the breeder should be notified); and
 - owner’s name, contact information, and reason for relinquishing ownership of the animal.
5. Perform a thorough evaluation of the animal for both social and medical problems.
6. Determine type of placement best suited to the individual animal. Some animals may be placed in homes with families, some in homes with no other pets, some in sanctuaries, etc. (*NOTE: The liability of placing a large, aggressive wolfdog is unacceptable when it could result in an injury and/or fatality, the prompting of lawsuits and further breed-specific legislation, etc.*)
7. Require owners to sign release waivers—relinquishing rights to and ownership of rescued animals.
8. Consider the communication and correspondence with the surrendering individual or agency as privileged information, releasing it only as required for medical questions/treatment.
9. Refrain from using the NLA name or claim NLA endorsement to facilitate a rescue unless given express permission to do so with approval by the NLA Board of Directors.

10. Courteously and responsibly network with other rescuers, agencies, and sanctuaries to achieve successful rescues, transports, and/or placements.

When responsibly placing an animal in its new home, I will

1. Provide the adoptive owner with accurate, honest information pertaining to the animal's health, behavior, and situation.
2. Place wolfdogs only in knowledgeable, screened, and vetted homes—achieved, in part, by a home check to verify suitability of placement.
3. Ensure that all rescues adopted out are current on vaccinations and have received a clean bill of health (unless the adopter is informed otherwise).
4. Spay/neuter all intact rescues prior to placement unless the physical health and/or mental well-being of the animal would be compromised and/or a veterinarian contraindicates altering.
5. Require adoptive owners to sign a contract outlining the conditions under which the animal is expected to be maintained and mandating that the animal be returned if the owner can no longer keep it. Costs associated with the adoption, transportation, and spay/neuter will be stipulated in the contract.
6. Abide by local and state laws regarding all aspects of transport and placement.

When responsibly placing an animal in a foster home, I will

1. Use foster care primarily for the short-term, temporary care of an animal, which could be necessitated for a variety of reasons: a long vacation, a natural disaster, moving, no vacancy at the shelter, etc.
2. Strive to avoid placing rescues in foster because being shuffled from home to home creates a significant amount of stress ; I will use foster care selectively and only in emergency situations for rescues.
3. Place wolfdogs only in educated, screened, and vetted foster homes.
4. Provide the foster care individual with accurate, honest information pertaining to the animal's health, behavior and situation.
5. Require all relevant parties to sign a foster care contract, which will outline the expected care and upkeep of the fostered animal, the costs for the stay (if it's an owner-foster rather than a rescue-foster), and the length of stay (*i.e.*, a deadline for the fostering of the animal).
6. Negotiate a reasonable deadline (for both owner-foster and rescue-foster) with the foster caregiver and adhere to it; either before or at the conclusion of the negotiated deadline, the wolfdog will be remanded back into the custody of its owner (if it's an owner-foster) or into the custody of the shelter or its new, adoptive owner (if the animal is a rescue-foster).
7. Require that wolfdog owners temporarily putting their animals into foster care establish a deadline for retrieving their animal from foster care and pay the foster individual for all food and medical expenses incurred while the animal is being cared for.
8. Stipulate in a foster-owner contract that if an animal is not retrieved after the specified length of stay (*i.e.*, the deadline for fostering), the owner relinquishes his or her rights to the animal; this clause protects the foster caregiver and provides for the animal in the case of owner abandonment.

The end goal of any rescue is to re-home the animal into a "forever home."



National Lupine Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 971063

Miami, FL 33197

www.NationalLupine.org

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