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Canicrossing at an event. Here's what you need to know.

Together with the team at DogFit, we have put together our top tips for taking part in a trail event with your dog.

1. Do your prep

Find out as much about the trail event as possible.

As well as the distance, check out the terrain (so you can plan your footwear), the likely number of participants (you may prefer a smaller race if your dog gets overwhelmed by too many people and dogs), the route (in the summer you will want a course with plenty of shade) and water stations (you may need to carry your own hydration pack).

Some organisers also ask for runners to have their dogs on a shorter 1.2m line (eg Park Run) so good to check this in advance.

2. Wear the correct canicross kit for you and your dog

It is important that you and your dog are as comfortable as possible and that you wear the correct canicross kit. Do not run your dog in a lead and collar. Canicross kit is designed to give your dog freedom of movement. DogFit produce a starter kit which includes the dog harness, bungee line and human belt available at www.dogfit.co.uk. We offer a 5% discount on kit and you can use the code DFR5.

CANICROSS ESSENTIALS

Canicross Belt

Designed to take the pull from around your core/hip area

Run Hands Free

In balance and in control

Canicross Dog Harness

Designed for canicross - effective and comfortable for your dog.



Effective running position

Keep balanced, upright and enjoy your run

Bungee Running Line

Elasticated section absorbs sharp jolts

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3. Plan your ETA

Arrive at the trail event with enough time to do a recce of the area, to warm up and to give your dog a chance to relieve himself.

Not rushing around will also help keep your dog calm (well, hopefully!) before the race starts.

However, don't arrive at the event too early if you have a high energised/excitable dog as too much hanging around may get them all agitated. Every dog is different of course - just be mindful of the environment that your dog is comfortable being in and don't put them under any unnecessary stress.

4. Consider the start line

Dedicated canicross events tend to follow a staggered start where runners go off individually at intervals.

However, canicross friendly races, i.e. dog-less events that welcome canicrossers, vary in how they manage the start for the canicrossers.

Some ask canicrossers to set off en masse with the dog-less runners, some start the canicrossers a few minutes either before or after the mass start. Either way consult your race organiser in advance so that you can prepare in the best way for your dog.

Whichever approach they take it's worth thinking about how your dog will react.

For some dogs it can be very stressful joining a mass start, especially when they are waiting at the start line and excitement levels are heightened - so you may want to consider keeping your dog to one side or at the very back until the race starts...or perhaps not doing it at all.

5. Use commands

Practising and perfecting some commands prior to your event will make a big difference to your overall race experience, whilst also building a great bond with your dog.

Favourites such as 'left' and 'right' for technical courses and 'with me/behind' for those challenging downhill sections will help you race much more efficiently.

6. Be considerate to other runners

When you overtake other runners, especially dog-less runners, be mindful that they may not be aware that there is a dog coming up behind them or they may not be too keen on dogs.

Communication and a friendly approach is key here. Just call out that a dog is coming past on their left or right, keep a good distance as you overtake (ideally keeping the line short while you do) and thank them when they move to one side for you.

Politeness and consideration goes a long way and ensures canicrossers are welcomed at future events.

7. Keep it clean

Always carry poo bags and be prepared to stop during a race if your dog does feel the need to poop!

Hopefully if you've arrived at the event in plenty of time that has already been taken care of before the race itself has started.

8. Carry provisions

If you are doing a particularly long race, e.g. half/full/ultra marathon, then it's worth thinking about hydration and nutrition and also running with a small rucksack with emergency supplies, such as water, collapsible drinking bowl, food, spare clothing and basic first aid kit.

Some events will insist on this anyway so do check their rules.

9. Bear in mind the weather

Do give consideration to the time of year and start time of the canicross event and whether your dog will be comfortable, e.g. is it potentially too hot to trot!? Know your dog and do not take any chances if there is high humidity.



| | | Actual Temperature Degrees Celcius | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|----|----|--|--|--|--|
| | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | | | | |
| Relative Humidity (%) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 18 | | | | |
| | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 6.5 | 8 | 8.5 | 9.5 | 11 | 11.5 | 12.5 | 14 | 14.5 | 16 | 17 | 18 | | | | |
| | 10 | 1 | 1.5 | 3 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 6 | 6.5 | 8 | 8.5 | 9.5 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 12.5 | 14.5 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | | |
| | 15 | 1 | 1.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 8.5 | 9 | 10 | 11.5 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | | |
| | 20 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 5 | 6.5 | 7 | 8.5 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 12.5 | 13.5 | 15 | 15.5 | 17 | 18 | 20 | | | | |
| | 25 | 1.5 | 2 | 3.5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 9.5 | 10.5 | 12 | 12.5 | 13.5 | 15.5 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | | | |
| | 30 | 1.5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7.5 | 9 | 9.5 | 10.5 | 12.5 | 13.5 | 14 | 16 | 16.5 | 18 | 19 | 21 | | | | |
| | 35 | 1.5 | 2 | 4 | 4.5 | 5.5 | 7 | 7.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 13.5 | 14.5 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 19 | 20 | 21 | | | | |
| | 40 | 2 | 2.5 | 4 | 4.5 | 5.5 | 7.5 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 11.5 | 13 | 13.5 | 14.5 | 16.5 | 17 | 19 | 20 | 21 | | | | |
| | 45 | 2 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 6 | 7.5 | 8 | 10 | 10.5 | 11.5 | 13.5 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 17.5 | 19 | 21 | 22 | | | | |
| | 50 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 8.5 | 10 | 10.5 | 11.5 | 13.5 | 14 | 15.5 | 17.5 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 22 | | | | |
| | 55 | 2.5 | 3 | 4.5 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 8.5 | 10.5 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 14.5 | 16 | 17.5 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 23 | | | | |
| | 60 | 2.5 | 3 | 5 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 8 | 9 | 10.5 | 11 | 12.5 | 14.5 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 18.5 | 21 | 22 | 23 | | | | |
| | 65 | 2.5 | 3 | 5 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 8.5 | 9 | 11 | 11.5 | 12.5 | 14.5 | 15 | 16.5 | 18.5 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 23 | | | | |
| | 70 | 3 | 3.5 | 5 | 5.5 | 7 | 8.5 | 9 | 11 | 11.5 | 13 | 15 | 15.5 | 17 | 18 | 19.5 | 21 | 23 | 24 | | | | |
| | 75 | 3 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 9.5 | 11.5 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 19 | 20 | 23 | 23 | 25 | | | | |
| | 80 | 3 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 9.5 | 11.5 | 12 | 13.5 | 15.5 | 16 | 17.5 | 19.5 | 20 | 23 | 24 | 25 | | | | |
| | 85 | 3.5 | 4 | 5.5 | 6 | 7.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 12 | 12.5 | 14 | 16 | 16.5 | 18 | 20 | 20.5 | 23 | 24 | 26 | | | | |
| 90 | 3.5 | 4 | 6 | 6.5 | 7.5 | 9.5 | 10 | 12 | 12.5 | 14 | 16 | 16.5 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 26 | | | | | |
| 95 | 3.5 | 4 | 6 | 6.5 | 8 | 10 | 10.5 | 12.5 | 13 | 14.5 | 16.5 | 17 | 18.5 | 20.5 | 21.5 | 23 | 25 | 26 | | | | | |
| 100 | 4 | 4.5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 10.5 | 12.5 | 13.5 | 14.5 | 17 | 17.5 | 19 | 21 | 21.5 | 24 | 25 | 27 | | | | | |

No Scooter or Rig Classes Beyond this Point

No Bikejoring Beyond this Point

No Canicross Beyond this Point

| | |
|--|--|
| | Where shaded - Recommend Run Full Distance |
| | Where shaded - Recommend Shorten Distance |
| | Where shaded - Do not run Heat |

10. Think about post-race provisions

After the race it's worth having a few provisions back in the car depending on the conditions.

For example, a handheld portable shower for your dog is useful if it's been particularly cold and muddy (if you fill it with hot water in the morning it should still be warm for when you need it), a coat for your dog, water, treats etc

11. Make sure you warm down

At the end of the race give yourself and your dog time to bring your heart rates down before jumping in the car and heading home, especially if it's been a warm day or you have a long journey ahead of you.

12. Give careful consideration as to whether this is the right race for you and your dog

Not every canicross event is for everyone and every dog. Some dogs thrive on a big mass canicross start, others fair better on staggered starts or less competitive races. Always put the needs of your dog first and be honest about whether they will enjoy it as much as you.