



The American Rettungshunde Sport Association (ARSA)

Constitution and Bylaws

Preamble. Search and rescue sport provides an opportunity for dog and handler teams to develop and test skills that can be useful in real-world search and rescue operations. The American Rettungshunde Sport Association supports the Search and Rescue Sport in the United States and conducts tests under the international rules (rules) of the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) and the International Rescue Dog Organisation (IRO).

Article I. Name

The name of this organization is The American Rettungshunde Sport Association

Article II. Purpose

The purposes of the organization are as follows:

- Encourage the development of the Search and Rescue Sport in the United States
- Provide guidance for dog and handler teams in the skills needed in the sport
- Conduct tests of dog and handler skills conforming to the rules of the FCI/IRO and administered by judges approved by FCI/IRO.
- Conduct other activities to support the Search and Rescue Sport

Article III: Membership

There is one category of member – individual members. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in search and rescue as a sport.

Article IV: Organization

1. Structure

The organization is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia as a non-stock corporation.

2. Governance

The organization is governed by an Executive Board (Board) made up of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Training Director, plus three additional members at large. Additional Board members, such as regional representatives or Membership Secretary, may be added as needed.

3. Powers of the Membership

The membership is responsible for the following:

- a. Amending the constitution and bylaws
- b. Electing the Board (except for Membership Secretary, if any, who is appointed by the Board, and regional representatives, if any, who are elected by the individual members of a region)
- c. Approving the annual budget

- d. Approving the winning bid for an annual championship
- e. Dissolving the organization

4. Powers of the Board.

Except for the responsibilities of the membership listed in the section above, the Board makes all other decisions regarding the operation of the organization.

Article V: The Board

The responsibilities of the Board include the following:

1. Conducting day-to-day operations of the organization.
2. Developing an organizational handbook setting out more detailed procedures for the activities of the organization, including grievance procedures, annual championship, requesting FCI judges, special committees, and any other issue pertinent to the operation of the organization.
3. Establishing annual dues and other required fees, according to procedures set out in the organization's handbook.
4. Appointing initial members of any standing committees.

Article VI: Officers

1. The President's responsibilities include the following:

- a. Determine, with the aid of other Board members, the action plans of the group
- b. Schedule and preside over regular meetings of the Board
- c. Preside at organization meetings
- d. Ensure that members are kept informed of the activities of the organization
- e. With the approval of the Board, appoint members to standing and special committees
- f. With the approval of the Board, appoint officers and committee members to fill vacancies that come up before the end of a regular term

2. The Vice President's responsibilities include the following:

- a. Assist the president, but not substitute for them
- b. Be prepared to assume the responsibilities of the president, if necessary
- c. Undertake other duties assigned by the president

3. The Secretary's responsibilities include the following:

- a. Keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the organization
- b. Set up and maintain a systematic, electronic method of filing the records of the organization that is easily accessible to the Board members and, as appropriate, the full membership
- c. Attend to official correspondence
- d. Distribute Board and membership meetings minutes
- e. With the President, prepare in advance the order of business for each meeting
- f. Cooperate with the Treasurer in keeping an accurate listing of membership status
- g. Have on hand at each meeting an agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, lists of committees and committee reports, a copy of the constitution and bylaws, and other information pertinent to that particular meeting

4. The Treasurer's responsibilities include the following:

- a. Maintain paper or electronic copies of all financial documents of the organization
- b. Prepare a proposed annual budget for submission to the Board and membership at the annual membership meeting
- c. Maintain a simple set of books and record all items of income and expenses as they occur
- d. Prepare requisitions for prompt payments of all invoices
- e. Collect dues
- f. Bank all organization funds
- g. Within the confines of the annual budget, pay out funds as directed by the President or Secretary
- h. Make reports at meetings as necessary
- i. Cooperate with the Secretary in keeping accurate membership records including names, addresses, dates paid, and funds received.

5. The Training Director's responsibilities include the following:

- a. Ensure all members have the most current version of the FCI/IRO rules
- b. Advise on interpretations of the rules
- c. Give seminars to members on preparing teams to perform in accordance with the rules
- d. If necessary, consult with FCI/IRO about issues relating to the rules

Article VII. Terms of office, elections, voting

1. Initial Board members are appointed by the founding members.

2. All Board members and members of standing committees serve for two-year terms, except for the initial term. During the first term of the organization, the President, Secretary, and one member at large serve three-year terms, so that after that not all Board members are up for re-election in the same year.

3. Candidates for officers, except for those appointed initially by the founding members, must have been a member of the organization for at least two years.

4. Board members are limited to three consecutive terms. They may be re-elected after a break of at least one full two-year term. If a person is appointed by the president to fill a vacancy, that appointed term counts as one of the three terms if this service lasts for at least twelve months.

5. Elections are held in time for results to be announced before the annual membership meeting, which is generally in April, to allow time for new officers to plan travel to in-person meetings.

6. Elections should be conducted electronically using a method that ensures anonymity of voters, prevents unauthorized persons from submitting a vote, and tallies votes electronically to minimize the opportunity for human error.

7. Unless otherwise specified in these bylaws, decision items require a vote of at least 50% to pass.

8. Board members may be removed from office by

- a. A two-thirds vote of the remaining board members
- b. Following a recall election requested by one-third of the members that results in a vote of at least 50% upholding removal

Article VIII. Committees

1. The organization has both standing committees and special committees.
2. Standing committees include the following:
 - a. Events committee, which organizes the annual championship
 - b. Membership committee, which encourages membership in the organization
 - c. Nominations committee, which obtains candidates for the biannual elections
3. Special committees are formed by the board from time to time to serve the needs of the organization.

Article IX: Governing Rules

1. The organization follows the pertinent requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia for non-stock corporations as well as all pertinent IRS rules.
2. For parliamentary procedures, the organization follows the most recent version of Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, unless the constitution or bylaws specify other procedures for specific matters.

Article X: Meetings

1. The Executive Board meets at least four times a year, either in person or electronically. Members may observe meetings of the Board except when the Board meets in executive session to deal with discipline, contracts, or other sensitive matters. Voting by the Board may be by paper ballot or electronically.
2. There is at least one membership meeting annually. The meeting may be in person or may be conducted electronically.

Article XI: Quorum

1. A quorum for Executive Board members is at least 50 percent of the members of the Board.
2. A quorum for the membership meeting is at least 25 percent of the members.

Article XII. Grievance and disciplinary procedures

The Board sets out appropriate procedures for filing grievances and disciplining members in the organization's handbook.

Article XIII: Constitution and Bylaws

1. The initial constitution and bylaws were adopted by a unanimous vote of the founding members on (date).
2. Amendments to the constitution and bylaws may be initiated by
 - a. A two-thirds vote of the Board
 - b. A petition from one-third of the individual members to the Board
3. Approval of amendments to the constitution and bylaws require a positive vote from at least two-thirds of the individual members.

Article XIV. Dissolving the organization

1. The organization may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of the membership or by a unanimous vote of the Board.

2. Any funds remaining in the organization's account when the organization dissolves will be donated to a compatible organization supporting the participation of dog and handler teams in search and rescue activities.

Approved unanimously by the founding members on May 28, 2021.

Article XIV. Other matters

1. All votes of the organization may be conducted electronically.