

# Wisconsin Recreational Facilities FACT SHEET



## Guidance for Dog Swim Events

### What is a dog swim event?

A dog swim event allows dogs to swim in public pools. It is usually held at the end of the summer operating season before the pool is cleaned and winterized.

### How does state law apply to dog swim events?

Dogs may swim in public pools in Wisconsin under certain conditions, as stated in Wis. Admin. Code § ATCP 76.335. This section of the regulations for public pools and water attractions in Wisconsin specifies when and how dogs are allowed in pools, and what additional restrictions and provisions must be in place to allow dogs in the pool.

In addition, other areas of ATCP 76 also apply to dog swim events. For example, if the pool is big enough to require a lifeguard, then lifeguards must still be present as indicated in ATCP 76.23 Table A. First aid and rescue items must also be present, along with other safety and rescue equipment, and certain safety practices.



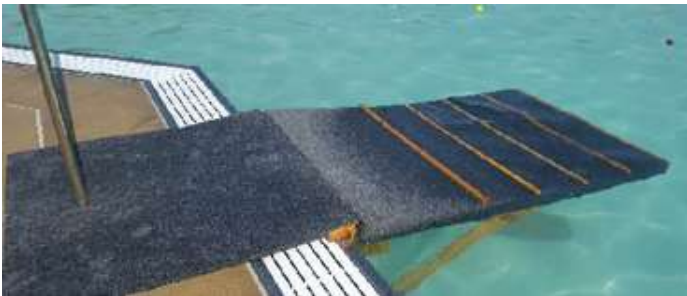
The specific regulations for a dog swim event include that the pool water cannot be managed in the usual way and in accordance with requirements for recirculation and disinfection under ATCP 76. The pool water cannot be filtered and disinfected as usual because the process would clog the filters and skimmers. There are specific requirements related to disposal of the water used for the dog swim and, also related to pool start-up the next season. Because the water is not continuously treated, the event must be started with a disinfectant cushion so the disinfectant will last for the duration of the event. This higher level of free chlorine has been found to provide adequate free chlorine for an event duration as long as three hours.

### What are the public (human) health and safety concerns?

**Disease transmission:** Some diseases are caused by micro-organisms (germs) that can be transmitted from dogs to people through their feces, blood, or saliva. During dog swim events, people can be exposed to dogs; contaminated surfaces like the pool deck, grassy areas, and general facility; and the water from the pool. Proper disinfectant level in the pool water can help to control some of these germs.



**Physical injury:** People have the potential to be injured by dogs playing or needing assistance during the swim events or struggling to exit the pool. If the pool does not have a zero-depth entry point, consider providing a ramp to make entries and exits easier for all dogs.



**Drowning:** A person who cannot swim may accidentally fall into the pool, or enter to assist their dog. Decreased water clarity due to dog hair and other debris from dogs may make it difficult to notice if a person is under water and needs help. A lifeguard must be provided if the pool is normally large enough to require a lifeguard, and rescue items such as a shepherd's crook are also required.



### What are the specific regulations for dog swim events?

Below is an outline of the requirements under ATCP 76.335 for event operators, and a re-printable list of rules for participants.

#### For event operators:

- A responsible supervisor must be present to ensure that operational requirements are met and rules are provided to participants, and followed.
- Water level must be kept below skimmers, and the recirculation system kept off.
- Disinfectant residual must be at least 4 ppm free chlorine at the start the event (8 ppm if cyanuric acid is in use).
- Registration of patrons and their dogs is required.
- Rabies vaccination is required for all dogs present.
- Prohibitions: splash pads, spray, jet and play features may not be operated. An activity pool may be used, but the spray features must be turned off.
- Relief area(s) must be provided.
- Pool water must be disposed of in accordance with local regulations, and not recirculated.
- Cleaning and scrubbing of the basin must occur after the pool water is drained. The pool must be superchlorinated before it is used the following season.
- Restrooms must be provided. One male and one female, or one unisex shower must be provided in case a shower is needed by a patron who entered the water to rescue a dog. Handwash sinks must be provided.
- Duration of the event: the event may not be longer than 3 hours from the time when the first dog enters the water.
- One dog per patron is allowed.

## Rules for Dog Swim Participants

The following rules must be shared with dog swim participants and enforced by the responsible supervisor or their designee:

- Each dog must be supervised by at least one person (*'patron'*).
- Each dog must have a current rabies vaccination.
- Only dogs are allowed in the pool, except in emergency.  
*If a patron enters the pool to assist their dog, it is recommended that they shower immediately afterward.*
- Only dogs who are willing to participate and comfortable in the water may participate.  
*Patrons should consider the depth of water that their dog will be in during the swim and participate only if the dog will be comfortable at that depth.*
- Dogs must be able to participate unassisted.  
*Patrons are not allowed in the water except during emergencies.*
- A dog behaving aggressively must be removed from the event immediately.
- Dogs with an open cut, wound, or hair and/or skin condition are not allowed.
- Dogs with loose stools are not allowed in the water.
- Patrons must supervise their dog at all times.
- Patrons must clean up feces immediately.