

RAT FANCIERS OF THE LAKES

Bylaws

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote ethical and responsible ownership, care, breeding and showing of fancy rats, encouraging our members to excel to the highest possible standards. We encourage fanciers to take an active role in encouraging ethical ownership, educating the public about the merits of rats as pets, and having an open and honest dialogue with other rat fanciers in order to improve the rat fancy as a whole.

ARTICLE I: THE CLUB

Section 1: The Name of the Club shall be: Rat Fanciers of the Lakes, also referred to as the RFL.

Section 2: The objectives of the RFL shall be:

- (a) Promoting ethical and responsible pet ownership and breeding of fancy rats;
- (b) Education of the public about the merits of pet rats;
- (c) Holding public events in a manner which is safe and health-protective for the rats.

Section 3: The Club shall not operate for profit. No part of any profits or residues from dues or donations to the Club shall inure to the benefit of any Member.

Section 4: Bylaws shall be adopted and may be revised by the Members as required to carry out these objectives.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Eligibility

Membership shall be open to all persons whose applications have been approved and who subscribe to the purpose of the RFL. Upon consideration by the Board, provisional membership status may be given for up to 90 days in order to prove that the goals and Code of Ethics of RFL are being adhered to. These shall be three types of membership:

- A. Regular
 - a. Single: Any person who has reached the age of 18 years of age may be a regular Member with full privileges from the date of membership
 - b. Family: Defined as two adults living at a single address. Each Member shall have individual voting rights.
- B. Junior
 - a. Any person between the ages of 12 and 17. Junior members cannot vote or hold office, however they may participate at club events and speak at meetings. A Junior Member may convert to regular membership upon attaining his/her 18th birthday.
- C. Provisional
 - a. Any person who is currently known to keep or breed rats in a manner inconsistent with the Code of Ethics and purposes of the RFL may be granted provisional membership status for a term lasting up to 90 days, depending on the discretion of the Board. During that time, the provisional member may attend, but not vote at club functions, nor bring rats to any show or event. If the provisional Member is shown at the end of the stated provisional period to have raised his/her standards of rat keeping and/or breeding to match the standards of RFL, they shall be granted full membership. If not, the provisional membership will be terminated by a vote of the Board.

Section 2: Dues

Dues are payable on or before the first of July during each year. During the month of June, the Treasurer shall send to each member a statement of his/her dues for the upcoming year. Membership of applicants elected after July first shall be extended through the following year. Membership dues shall be set annually

RAT FANCIERS OF THE LAKES
Bylaws

by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board. An affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board shall be required to change the dues amount. Notification of unpaid dues as of July first shall be sent to the Treasurer by July 15. No Member may vote whose dues are not paid for the current fiscal year.

Section 3: Application for Membership

Each applicant for membership shall apply with a form approved by the Board and which shall provide that the applicant agrees to abide by the bylaws and Code of Ethics. The application shall carry the name and address of the applicant and it shall carry the endorsement of one member in good standing with RFL. Accompanying the application of the prospective member shall be dues for the current year. Dues will be refunded if member is not elected into the RFL.

Each application is to be filed with the Secretary and each application is to be reviewed and voted upon by secret ballot at the first Club meeting following its receipt. Approval requires affirmative votes by three quarters of the members present. Applicants for membership who have been rejected by RFL may re-apply no sooner than one year after the date of denial.

Section 4: Membership Termination

- (a) By resignation. Any Member in good standing may resign from RFL upon written notice to the Secretary, but no member may resign when in debt to the Club. Dues obligations are considered a debt to the Club, and are incurred on the first day of July.
- (b) By lapsing. A membership will be considered lapsed and automatically terminated if such member's dues remain unpaid after a 30 days' grace period after July 1. For up to 90 days after the grace period, an individual can apply for reinstatement of membership status upon approval by the Board and payment of dues.
- (c) By expulsion. A membership may be terminated by expulsion as provided in Article VII of these Bylaws.

ARTICLE III: MEETINGS

Section 1: Club Meetings

RFL meetings are held monthly, and may be held online at the Board's discretion. The body responsible for calling Club and Board meetings is the Board. Written notice shall be emailed and posted on the website at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting. The quorum for such meetings shall be two-thirds of the current officers. All Members in good standing who attend the meeting shall have voting privileges.

Section 2: Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board may be held immediately prior to a regular meeting, or online via private chat. Written notice of such meetings shall be emailed at least 5 days prior to the date of the meeting. The quorum for such a meeting shall be a majority of the Board.

Section 3: Voting

Each Member in good standing whose dues are paid for the current year shall be entitled to vote at any RFL meeting at which that Member is present. Proxy voting will only be permitted by post mail, including a signature of the Member.

ARTICLE IV: BOARD AND OFFICERS

Section 1: Board of Directors

The Board shall be comprised of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. These Officers shall be elected for full one-year terms. They shall be elected to these terms as provided in Article IV and shall serve through June 31 of the year their terms expire. The Treasurer and President may not be related by blood or marriage. General management of RFL's affairs shall be entrusted to the Board. Any Board member may be removed if absent without notice for three consecutive meetings.

RAT FANCIERS OF THE LAKES

Bylaws

Section 2: Officers

RFL's officers, consisting of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer shall serve in their respective capacities both with regard to RFL and its meetings and the Board and its meetings

- (a) The President shall preside at all meetings of RFL and of the Board and shall have the duties and powers normally pertinent to the office of President in addition to those particularly specified by these Bylaw.
- (b) The Vice-President shall have the duties and exercise the powers of the President in case of the President's incapacity or removal.
- (c) The Secretary shall notify Officers of their election to office, shall record and publish minutes, shall keep a roll of Members with their addresses and email, track down all votes taken, notify Members of meetings, keep minutes of each meeting and keep all records which are ordered by RFL, in addition to any duties described by these Bylaws.
- (d) The Treasurer shall collect and receive monies due or belonging to RFL. S/he shall deposit the same in a depository approved by the Board in the name of the Club. His/her books shall at all times be open to inspection of the Board and s/he shall report at every meeting the condition of RFL's finances and every item of receipt or payment not previously reported.

Section 3: Vacancies

Any vacancies occurring within the Board or among the officers during the year shall be filled until the next annual election by a majority vote of all the current member of the Board, except the vacancy of the office of President, which shall be filled automatically by the Vice President. The resulting vacancy of the Vice President shall be filled by the Board.

ARTICLE V: FISCAL YEAR, VOTING, NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS

Section 1: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year is from July 1 to June 31. The annual meeting will be held in June, and elections will be during that meeting. All nominations will be done during the November meeting.

Section 2: Nominations

Nominations will come from the body of Members in good standing. The only persons eligible for nominations will be Members in good standing. All nominations will be made at the November meeting, or written nominations may be submitted by postal mail with a signature, which must be received by the Secretary by October 25.

Section 3: Annual Election

The election of Officers shall be conducted by secret ballot. Proxy ballots to be valid must be received by the Secretary by June 25. Three members in good standing who are not Members of the current Board nor a candidate on the ballot provided shall tally the votes. If there are not three Members in good standing who are not on the current Board nor a candidate on the ballot, the Board of Directors shall select three of its members to count the votes, with preference given to those not on the current ballot. The person receiving the largest number of votes shall be elected to the Board.

Officers to each position shall be elected within the Board itself.

If any nominee is unable or unwilling to serve at the time the ballots are counted, such nominee shall not be elected and the Board shall fill the vacancy so created.

ARTICLE VI: SHOWS

Section 1: Guidelines

All sanctioned shows held by RFL will adhere to posted standard and show guidelines. No one who is not a Member in good standing of RFL or an affiliated club shall be allowed to bring animals to the show. No animals will be sold or placed at the show without a pre-reserve form submitted.

RAT FANCIERS OF THE LAKES

Bylaws

Section 2: Quarantine and Pre-Show Isolation

Pre-show isolation is to be implemented prior to every RFL show. Quarantine must be implemented at any infectious outbreak within a rattery.

Quarantine is to be defined as a closed rattery (rattery being the place in which any rat is being kept as a resident) for 60 days. Closed means no new rats are being brought into the rattery, no babies have been born or weaned within the rattery, and no rats have been exposed to other rats in any way, including while riding to a show.

Pre-show isolation is to be defined as a semi-closed rattery for 30 days. No new rodents, lagomorphs or avians will be allowed into the rattery, nor will any rodents, lagomorphs or avians who have left the rattery be allowed back inside. No babies will be bred, born or weaned during this time period. Rats may be adopted out if adopter is met at a separate location. Rats who die during pre-show isolation must be verified by a qualified veterinarian to have died of non-infectious causes.

The practice of proper quarantine procedure is regarded as highly important by RFL. There will be no tolerance for RFL members, or those attending RFL events, who do not comply with the quarantine and pre-show isolation guidelines. All efforts will be made to see that procedures are followed and carried out correctly by anyone attending an RFL show. Failure to practice proper quarantine or pre-show isolation will result in the suspension of that member from attending all affiliated shows for not less than one year, and may result in the suspension or expulsion of the member from RFL, or banishment from exhibiting or attending all future RFL shows.

Section 3: Health Check

All animals brought in for exhibition must be checked for health. Wounds, scabs, nits, mites, lice, ulcerations, tumors or abscesses which are visible or detectable through handling will automatically disqualify an animal. Any biting will automatically disqualify the animal. Repeated sneezing, coughing, wheezing, choking, or gurgling breathing will automatically disqualify the animal. All animals who fail health check must leave the show grounds immediately. No animal will touch the clothing of a judge or clerk if at all possible. Handling of all animals will be limited to the owner, judge, and health check personnel, and hands will be disinfected in between the handling of every animal by show personnel.

Section 4: Handling Guidelines

All animals shown in an exhibition must be brought in solid-sided containers. At no time will a rat in a wire cage or cat-style pet carrier be allowed into the exhibition area. All rats cleared during the health check for exhibition will be taken into the care of their owners and kept away from the public. No animal cleared for exhibition may be handled by anyone other than the owners, judges, and clerks. No animal will touch the clothing of a judge or clerk if at all possible. Handling of all animals will be kept to a minimum, and hands will be disinfected in between the handling of every animal.

ARTICLE VII: DISCIPLINE

Section 1: Charges

Any Member in good standing may cite charges against any other Member for alleged misconduct prejudicial to the best interests of RFL, or the rat fancy. Written charges with specifications must be filed to the Secretary. The Secretary will promptly send copies to each member of the Board or present them at the next Board meeting. The Board shall first determine whether the actions alleged, if proven, constitute conduct detrimental to RFL, or the rat fancy. If the Board considers the charges do not allege such conduct, it may refuse to entertain jurisdiction. If the Board entertains jurisdiction on the charges, it shall first attempt to resolve the grievance prior to a formal hearing by appointing an arbiter who will attempt to settle the matter in a manner which satisfies both the accuser and accused.

If arbitration fails, within ten (10) days from the date the Board entertained jurisdiction, the Board shall fix a date of hearing by the Board not more than six (6) weeks after the date of entertainment of jurisdiction. The Secretary shall promptly send one copy of the charges to the accused Member by certified mail, return

RAT FANCIERS OF THE LAKES

Bylaws

receipt, together with a notice of hearing and an assurance that the defendant may personally appear in his/her defense and bring witnesses if s/he wishes.

Section 2: Board Hearing

Should the charges be sustained after hearing all the evidence and testimony presented by the plaintiff and his/her witnesses, and the defendant and his/her witnesses, the Board may, at a majority vote of those present (who are not involved in the case as plaintiff, defendant, or witness,) suspend the defendant from all privileges of RFL for not more than six (6) months from the date of the hearing. If the Board deems this punishment insufficient, it may also recommend to the membership that the punishment may be the conversion of the membership status to provisional (Article II Section 1-C) or expulsion from the Club. Immediately after the Board reaches its decision, its findings shall be put in written form and filed with the Secretary. The Secretary shall notify each of the parties of the decision of the Board.

Section 3: Conversion to Provisional Membership

If the Board feels the offense was serious and detrimental but was made out of ignorance, or if the Board feels the Member is truly regretful and has a good chance of changing their ways to more closely follow the interests of RFL, and the rat fancy, their membership may convert to provisional membership as provided in Article II Section 1-C of these Bylaws. This conversion shall last for 90 days. At the end of the provisional period, the Board shall re-review the Member, and if the Board feels they are now abiding by the interests of RFL, and the rat fancy, return their membership to active in good standing. Otherwise, the Member will be expelled from the Club.

Section 4: Expulsion

Expulsion of a member from RFL can only occur at a meeting of the entire Board following a hearing. The defendant shall have the privilege of appearing in his/her own behalf, though no evidence or argument shall be taken at that time. The President shall read the charges and the findings and recommendations and shall invite the defendant, if present, to speak on his/her behalf. The meeting shall then vote by secret (written) ballot on the proposed expulsion. A two-thirds vote of those present and voting shall be necessary for expulsion. If expulsion is not so voted, the suspension shall stand.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS

Section 1: Means of Proposal

Amendments to the Bylaws may be proposed by the Board of Directors or by written petition addressed to the Secretary signed by one-quarter of the Membership in good standing. Amendments proposed by such petition shall be promptly considered by the Board of Directors and must be submitted to the Members with the recommendations of the Board by the Secretary within three (3) months of the date that the petition was first received by the Secretary.

Section 2: Amendment

The Bylaws may be amended at any time provided a copy of the proposed amendment has been mailed by the Secretary to each Member accompanied by a ballot on which s/he may indicate his/her choice for or against amendment. The notice shall specify a date not less than 30 days after the date of mailing by which date the ballots must be returned to the Secretary to be tallied. The favorable vote of two-thirds of the Members in good standing whose ballots are returned within the time limit shall be required for the amendment to go through.

ARTICLE IX: DISSOLUTION

Section 1: Dissolution

RFL may be dissolved at any time by the written consent of not less than three-quarters of the Members. In the event of the dissolution of the RFL, other than for the purpose of reorganization, none of the financial assets of the Club shall be distributed to any Members, other than to pay accumulated bills or debts.

Last Amended: April 2008