

SAM-O-GRAM

February 2026



WHO WE ARE

OFFICERS

President

Martha Lageschulte 303.929.9064

Vice President

Linda Kitzman 303.794.7136

Recording Secretary

Donna Dannen 720.219.9955

Corresponding Secretary

Tammy Linnert 303.908.4541

Treasurer

Terry Walb 303.204.1453

BOARD

Tamara Barach 614.753.8531

Dan Elvera 720.344.4562

Lorrie McAllister 720.308.2019

Sue Wangerin 720.879.8741

COMMITTEES

Agility

Terry Walb 303.204.1453

Awards

Kristi Schopfer 303.838.9848

Cheer

Donna Dannen 303.670.8053

Colorado Legislation Liaison

Pam Buhl 303.915.1725

Lorrie McAllister 720.308.2019

FastCAT

Tammy Linnert 303.908.4541

Historian/Librarian

Donna Dannen 303.670.8053

Hospitality - Holiday Party

Tammy Linnert 303.908.4541

Hospitality - Summer Picnic

Linda Kitzman 303.794.7136

Information Technology

Terry Walb 303.204.1453

JoDee Putnins 303.358.1511

Lori Elvera 720.344.4562

Lorrie McAllister 720.308.2019

Local Specialty '26

Lori Elvera 720.344.4562

Public Education - Need volunteer

Sam-O-Gram

Martha Lageschulte 303.929.9064

Social Media

Lori Elvera 720.344.4562

Pam Buhl 303.915.1725

Denver Samoyed Rescue

Sue Wangerin 720.879.8741

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Winter Olympics Games Have Begun!

We are HUGE fans of the Olympics at my house - if the TV is on, we are watching the Games. The athletes work so hard for years to perfect their form and sharpen their bodies. I also enjoy the back stories on where the participants have come from and what drives them to be their best. I keep hearing the old ABC Wide World of Sports slogan - "The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat" as I watch the competitions.

I especially enjoy watching the Slopestyle and Big Air competitions. It is a newer sport that is constantly evolving - new tricks that push the athletes further and further. Every Olympic cycle brings so much more awe-inspiring runs.

We were watching the women's big air medal round the other evening. The Gold medal winner from the 2022 games (Zoi Sadowski-Synnott) was in the lead going into the final woman (Kokomo Murase) laying down her run, and Kokomo won. As soon as the run was completed, Zoi came out to Kokomo and gave her a huge hug and congratulated her, it was so heartwarming to see such great sportsmanship. Zoi later was interviewed and she said that they are always rooting and pushing each other to be even better.

As we are beginning our 2026 show year, we need to keep in mind being a great sports/spokesperson for our breed and the shows. We are all there to give it our best, but our friends and competition can push us to improve. More training, better grooming, new techniques - it all adds up for us to be better and grow as a sport and be better teams.

Martha Lageschulte
DSA President

Meeting Date and Location for February Meeting!

February 16, 2026

6:45 pm - 8:30 pm

ZOOM - check your email for the link!

(sent 2/9 from Denver Samoyed Association)

DSA January Annual Board Planning Meeting - Saturday, January 10, 2026

Martha Lageschulte's house, Brighton, CO

Meeting called to order 10:22 am

Present: Martha Lageschulte, Linda Kitzman, Donna Dannen, Tammy Linnert, Terry Walb, Tamara Barach, Sue Wangerin, Lorrie McAllister, Dan Elvera (via Zoom)

President: Martha Lageschulte

Welcome to the new Board and thank you for attending.

Vice President: Linda Kitzman

- Keilli Kogan application for membership needs more information to process (she has health issues that may not allow her to attend meetings)
- Sponsors should be responsible for education of applicants as well as explaining the types of membership that fits applicants' interest in the club
- Sam-O-Gram should list types of membership and explain them
- We need to review the members who have not attended during the year and suggest they change to an associate membership by November when dues are sent out
- Individual members vote and can chair a committee
- 20% of voting members make up a quorum (currently, 11 members must be present for a quorum)
- 3 Zoom meetings per year were discussed

Recording Secretary: Donna Dannen

No report.

Corresponding Secretary: Tammy Linnert

- AKC has new recommendations on club finances, requesting audits in depth.
- ACTION: Pam, Terry Walb and Tammy Linnert will work on the AKC suggestions and then take it to the board.
- The roster of members and a list of officers for 2026 was sent to AKC.

Treasurer: Terry Walb

- Terry needs to create a new account within Quicken; she will meet with Pam for reports from 2025.
- Sue would like to see the financial reports for DSR on the website, so she is able to track expenses and donations. Terry Walb will put transaction reports for both accounts in the Members area in the financial section. Also needed is the inclusion of the 2025 specialty, agility & fast cat breakdowns
- Terry Walb suggested we consider creating committee budgets based on the results from

the previous years' reports. Committee chairs can then come back to the Board to request any needed additional funds.

- Sue Wangerin asked about Mary Lloyd's expected donation to Denver Samoyed Rescue has been received as promised
- As a non-profit organization, our bank account balance at the end of the year appears to be within IRS limits

Board: Tamara Barach, Dan Elvera, Lorrie McAllister, Sue Wangerin

No report.

Committees

Agility: Terry Walb

- All is good to go. Set up at 3:30 pm on Friday, Jan. 16
- We have judges committed for the 2027 & 2028 agility trials

Awards: Kris Schopfer

- Kris Schopfer will continue as committee chair
- In 2026, awards applications will go through the website Store

Cheer: Donna Dannen

Donna will continue as Chair.

Concurrent Specialty: Linda Kitzman, Pam Buhl, Shanah Streweler

- Mary Beth at Onofrio will send a contract and portal template for the premium list
- Rosette budget is reduced from that of our Stand-Alone Specialty—the company has not been decided
- Donations will be taken at the Store on the website
- Trophies — businesses may be solicited for donations
- Major win rosettes only was suggested
- No trophies for class placements was suggested
- Info to be sent to Terry Walb for the Store for rosette & possibly trophy donations
- Martha Lageschulte suggested looking into Linda Kitzman's idea of rosettes in shadow boxes be also used as trophies
- A reserved grooming block for our group needs to be purchased by the club. Those purchasing a reserved site will then pay the club for their site(s). This procedure needs to be in the premium list
- Judges: Pam Schroeder will be paid \$4.00/entry up to \$200.00
- Susie Francis will judge Sweepstakes
- We will have a picnic during the concurrent specialty, similar to our usual summer social picnic

- Questions concerning a meeting at the picnic were if, because of the timing of specialty judging and regular Flatirons show judging, should we have a brunch or lunch provided, and will there be a club meeting at this time.

Legislative Liaisons: Pam Buhl, Lorrie McAllister

Motion 26-001B: Linda Kitzman moved, seconded by Tamara Barach, that we give the Colorado Dog Federation a \$25 donation, and pay our 2026 dues of \$75. APPROVED by the board

FastCat: Tammy Linnert

- February 27 is set up (we need volunteers) exact time to be determined.
- February 28 & March 1; 9 am to 3 pm
- We need a link in the Sam-O-Gram to Harmony Dog Sports for entries
- A worker's sign-up list will go out after the agility trial
- There will be a designated lunch break each day from 11:30 am to noon
- We request that owners of very large breeds have their own releasers

Historian/Librarian: Donna Dannen

No report.

IT: Terry Walb, JoDee Putnins, Lori Elvera, Tammy Linnert

- Passwords for the administrators were changed.
- Google Drive access is just for Board Members. Committee chairs will have access to the section of the Google Drive pertinent to their committee.

Hospitality/Holiday Party: Tammy Linnert

- Tammy Linnert will continue as chair of Awards banquet
- Fox Hollow may be unavailable in 2026 only, because of construction, other restaurants are being considered for 2026

Local Specialty 2025: JoDee Putnins, Terry Walb

- Past specialty winners were incorrect on the back page of the 2025 catalog. The file has been corrected and is in the Google Drive specialty folder for the 2026 specialty.
- There was a discussion on the Best Puppy issue in 2025 (detailed in December Board minutes).
- For clarification, donations are only listed in the catalog of those received before the Premium List is due in July—donations that come in later can be listed in the Store on the donation section of the website.
- Judge liaison, Pam Arnold, will have a cheat-sheet list of all the different titles that can apply to the Working Sweeps classes.
- AKC has changed the jump type for obedience and rally. We have used ASCA jumps in the past & these are no longer approved. We will need to

rent the AKC approved jump.

- DougCo now requires a schematic of our show set up for DougCo and a permit must be obtained from the fire department.
- We will need an update of inventory of DSA supplies and location for ease of obtaining them for the show and returning afterwards

Local Specialty 2026: Lori Elvera

- A stand-alone specialty budget review is on our Agenda for the March board meeting
- Costs of both Specialties to be reviewed: Rosettes, Trophies, Decorating costs, Banquet costs, Hospitality costs, Rally, Obedience, value of donated goods
- Dan Elvera's pivot table will be sent to Terry Walb

Local Specialty 2027:

- We need to review our process for selection show chairs of our specialty
- Open the chair discussion to the membership and ask for any interest before making a decision on the chairmanship
- Cheryl Martin may have volunteered; Martha Lageschulte will review with her before the membership meeting in January

Programs

- A possible barbecue outdoors with a short hike was suggested
- Summer soiree will be continued in 2026; June, July and August
- An ice cream social was suggested
- Martha Lageschulte explained wine bottle label sales for a fund raiser

Public Education: Pam Buhl

- Meet the Breeds will showcase Samoyeds at February CKC show on Sunday
- Materials for this need to go to Pam Buhl

Sam-O-Gram: Martha Lageschulte

Needs need input by first of month.

A correction needs to be made for the November membership meeting minutes: Sue Wangerin attended

Social Media: Lori Elvera, Pam Buhl

No report.

Rescue: Sue Wangerin

- Quarterly report that may include private information should go to Martha as well as to the committee members
- A non-detailed report can go for meeting minutes

Old Business

- Committee reports are due at the end of January.
- Job descriptions are in except for Treasurer.

Terry Walb and Pam Buhl will complete the description by the March meeting.

We will revisit the By-laws in 2026

- Number of meeting attendance for board member nominations for election
- AKC wants our club's region coverage verbiage updated in our by-laws
- Include staggered Board terms
- Ad hoc By-laws committee will be: Tammy Linnert, chair, Terry Walb, Donna Dannen, and Lorrie McAllister

Motion 26-002B: by Lorrie McAllister, seconded by Tammy Linnert: Effective Jan. 1, 2026, we will change Juniors to no dues to DSA. Any juniors that have paid for 2026 will be reimbursed. APPROVED by the board.

- Emergency forms can be found on the website
- Breeder referral forms sent out with dues should be include opt out option on dues form
- Terry Walb will research the possibility of non-profits obtaining Adobe Acrobat fillable forms for \$15 per month

New Business

- Number of Zoom meetings (three per year) were discussed; February, July and August membership meetings will be via Zoom
- Pam Buhl will reserve Natural Grocers for the months of Jan, Mar, Apr, May, Sept, Oct, Nov
- A suggestion was made to check possibility of southern meeting place change to Rec centers or libraries or possibly REI flagship store; Tammy Linnert will research

- Douglas County Fairgrounds has instituted new polices that will significantly affect our ability to plan events there. Because we are considered a small event, we can reserve facilities only six months before the event.
- Specialty location review research by Lori Elvera found that other sites were unaffordable or unavailable on Thanksgiving weekend.
- Dan Elvera and Kent Cherne will meet with the Douglas County Fairgrounds Board to request that DSA be grandfathered in for a year in advanced for facility reservations.
- Pam Buhl is working on DSA taxes for 2025
- We agreed to list deadlines for important tax and reporting documents on the DSA business calendar.
- IRS 990 tax form is due May 31st for the previous year.
- Our annual report to the State is due the first 3 months of the year.
- AKC fees have been increased to \$4.50 per entry on January 1, 2026, for all AKC events. The fee will increase to \$5.50 per entry in 2027.
- We need to increase our entry fees by \$1.00 for our 2026 specialty.

Adjourn at 2 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Dannen, Recording Secretary

DSA January Membership Meeting - Monday, January 19, 2026

Natural Grocers, Arvada, CO

Meeting called to order 6:53 pm

Present: Martha Lageschulte, Tammy Linnert Greg Linnert, Linda Kitzman, Pam Buhl, Julie Morris, Tamara Barach, Jan Cherne, Rachel Paulson, Terry Walb, Lorrie McAllister, Lori Elvera
Guest/Applicant for membership: Amber Brown Stanley, Guest: Julie Yelin

President: Martha Lageschulte

Welcomed everyone present, and had each person introduce themselves.

Vice President: Linda Kitzman

Reported that our guest, Amber Brown Stanley, turned in her application as an associate member and was completing her first meeting attendance (of two necessary for membership)

- Linda read Amber's application
- Linda mentioned that we should all be more interactive with applicant members, especially those we sponsor
- The different types of memberships should be explained by applicants' sponsors

Recording Secretary: Donna Dannen

Reported the revision of the minutes for the November membership meeting was approved at the January board meeting.

Corresponding Secretary: Tammy Linnert

No report.

Treasurer: Terry Walb

General Fund: \$25,157.88
Rescue fund: \$10,979.09
CD: \$21,281.37

As of today's deadline, dues not renewed: Krista & Sage Hansen, John McAllister

Dues not received were primarily out-of-state associate members

Board: Tamara Barach, Dan Elvera, Lorrie McAllister, Sue Wangerin

No report.

Committees

Agility: Terry Walb

- 2026 agility trial is done with 700 runs (a full trial)
- We are thankful for our workers that helped support the trial. Along with committee members, Pam Arnold, Martha Lageschulte, Chris Maslin Cole and Chris Eberhardt, Cheryl and Rodney Martin, Bob Mast and Jim Lageschulte worked all day both days. Jan and Kent Cherne, Julie and Joe Morris worked all day Saturday. Tammy and Greg Linnert, Lorrie McAllister, Linda and Scott Deits worked Sunday. Lori Johnson came from home Sunday afternoon to help when we were short of workers. Full financials are not yet available.
- The 2026 AKC fee increase per entry was 1/3 of our revenue this year
- In the past, there was a break in multiple entries; many of the entries came from single owners of multiple entrants
- This fee hike will impact our conformation specialties. It is not known if this includes only the regular classes or all entries

Awards: Kris Schopfer

- Kris agreed to do our annual award plaques and tags again in 2026
- This year the applications for awards will be included on the website store

Cheer: Donna Dannen

A card was sent to Sue Wangerin for the loss of her Samoyed, Shelby.

Concurrent Specialty: Linda Kitzman, Pam Buhl

- Our contract with Jack Onofrio Dog Shows needs to be reviewed, signed by Martha Lageschulte and sent in to Onofrio
- We will have access to their Premium List Portal
- Specialty show judging will be in the morning
- Flatirons KC show Samoyed judging will be in the afternoon
- The AKC application has been filled out
- Our entry fees will be the same as the Flatiron KC's: \$32 for regular classes

Motion 26-003 Lori Elvera moved, seconded by Jan Cherne, that Sweepstakes for both our concurrent and Individual specialties' entry fees will increase to \$28 in 2026. Approved.

- Martha Lageschulte worked on the contracts for our regular classes judge, Pam Schroeder, who will charge \$4 per dog up to \$200, and for our sweepstakes judge, Susie Francis

Motion 26-004 Lorrie McAllister motioned and was seconded by Linda Kitzman that DSA look into getting a junior showmanship judge for the 2026 concurrent specialty.

Discussion: We should wait for future concurrent specialties, if there be any, to offer Junior Showmanship classes. At this point we should see what our time restraints are considering juniors is offered at the Flatirons show and may conflict with juniors at our concurrent specialty.

Motion was not approved

- The above discussion brought up whether the proposed summer social picnic should be done at another date along with a member meeting and include a lunch, instead of being included in the concurrent specialty since time restraints are currently unknown.
- Instead of a picnic lunch, we could have an ice cream social event. The "Sweet Cow" is a possible nearby source of the ice cream.

Legislative Liaisons: Pam Buhl, Lorrie McAllister

- The Colorado Federation of Dog Clubs and Owners is our liaison for legislation affecting dog breeders, dog clubs, shows and owners. We have paid our 2026 dues and a donation of \$25.
- Several bills are forthcoming that affect us: such as selling dogs in any public area (that includes meeting puppy exchanges from breeder to new owner).

FastCat: Tammy Linnert

- A worker list form will be sent by email the first week of February to all members
- Entries were open as of January 15, and will close on February 13
- Set up time to last 3 hours is on February 27 at 12:30 pm.
- Get worker coupons to Tammy Linnert to receive a code to use when making AKC entries through Harmony Dog Sports
- Event times: 9-11 a.m. with a lunch break (which will be pizza) from 11-11:30 a.m., resuming dogs running from 11:30-3 pm.
- So far there are 75 entries with 330 entries being a full event
- Entries are \$27 this year to raise by \$1 in 2027
- There was a discussion of what Fast CAT is, and how it works
- Each dog can run two times each day
- This event will take place at Arapahoe Park, Washington St., Golden, Colorado
- Information will be by email and in the newsletter or through the Harmony Dog Sports website

- Tales of Voyage will be our photographers. Hopefully they can arrive at 8 a.m. to take photos of the workers' dogs running.

Historian/Librarian: Donna Dannen

No report.

IT: Terry Walb, JoDee Putnins, Lori Elvera, Tammy Linnert

- Agility photos will go onto the website on the Events page under Past Event Galleries.
- The updated membership roster will go up on the website

Hospitality/Holiday Party: Tammy Linnert

- The banquet likely will be moved from Fox Hollow in 2026 as it will be under construction
- Tammy is checking area restaurants for the 2026 Holiday season only

Local Specialty 2026: Lori Elvera

- As decided by the Board, Dan Elvera and Kent Cherne will meet with the Douglas County Board to request that DSA be grandfathered in for a year in advance for facility reservations
- Douglas County Fairgrounds recently decided "small events" have a 6- month reservation window which might be not available due to larger events reserving a year in advance and using the facility at the same date.
- This new regulation makes it difficult to get our applications in to AKC and SCA in time.
- The DSA website store now has the donations section for the stand-alone November specialty

Local Specialty 2027:

- Cheryl Martin wants to chair this specialty
- We need a method to open and approve future show chairs at November club meetings
- This will go on our 2027 calendar for the 2028 Stand-alone Specialty

Programs

A barbecue group picnic site/hike was suggested for Staunton State Park by Donna Dannen and Lori Elvera. This could be done mid-week since many of us are retired. Weekends can be busy there.

Donna and Lori will do some research on this idea. It could also be our summer social picnic.

Public Education: Pam Buhl

- "Meet the Breeds" at the CKC show is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Sunday, February, 15
- CKC advertises these shows on area media
- Meet the Breeds usually takes place at the main entrance area
- We have a poster board on choosing a dog breed as a pet
- We have a brochure with a QR code that goes to our website

- Other materials were requested; they should go to Pam Buhl
- Entered dogs are needed to be on site to meet the public

Sam-O-Gram: Martha Lageschulte

Needs need input by first of month.

Social Media: Lori Elvera, Pam Buhl

No report.

Rescue: Sue Wangerin

Donations received:

- \$250 Betty Hill
- \$100 Elizabeth Reller (Jane Reller's sister)

Old Business

- Committee chair reports are due at the end of January
- A committee was formed by the Board (Tammy Linnert, chair, Terry Walb, Lorrie McAllister, Donna Dannen) to revisit the wording of our physical area of membership to AKC wording. Also to stagger our board member terms

New Business

- Three of our member meetings will be via Zoom during non-voting months that includes February, July and August. Tammy will send out the link to all members to upload the meeting
- The Board voted there will be no membership charge for junior members of the club beginning in 2026. Dues that have come in will be refunded.

Barks 'n' Growls

Tammy Linnert: Winter attended the Orlando Shows and was BOS at the Brevard Kennel club on Wednesday: BOS at the Central Florida Working Group Friday and received an Award of Excellence at the Royal Canin National Championship.

Terry Walb: Travis received his DCAT certificate. It was a surprise as we had not calculated enough points for the title.

Martha Lageschulte: Capella earned an Open Standard leg with a 1st place at DSA agility trial.

Adjourn at 8:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Dannen, Recording Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT, ENDING 1/31/2026

Income/Expense by Category: 1/1/2025-12/31/2025

GENERAL FUND

Income		
	Agility Trial	\$ 12,267.00
	Trophy Donation	\$ 60.00
	Local Specialty	\$ 3.00
	Membership	\$ 168.00
	Total Income	\$ 12,498.00
Expenses		
	Agility Expense	\$ (9,585.25)
	FastCAT Expenses	\$ (117.97)
	Gifts & Donations	\$ (25.00)
	Hospitality	\$ (60.88)
	Legislation	\$ (75.00)
	Local Specialty Expenses	\$ (100.00)
	Miscellaneous	\$ (25.00)
	Total Expenses	\$ (9,989.10)
Total		\$ 2,508.90

RESCUE FUND

Opening Balance		10,870.09
Income		
	Donation	100.00
Expenses		
	Total Expenses	0.00
Total		100.00
Closing Balance		10,970.09

AGILITY TRIAL 2026 FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Income		
	Agility Trial	
	- Entry Fees	\$ 12,267.00
Expenses		
	Agility Expense	
	- Agility Trial Supplies	\$ (50.31)
	- Food & Beverages	\$ (293.05)
	- Judge's Expenses	\$ (690.90)
	- Judge's Fees	\$ (1,225.00)
	- Judge's Gifts	\$ (31.22)
	- Judges's Expenses	\$ (237.38)
	- MACH bars	\$ (88.00)
	- Recording Fee	\$ (3,250.00)
	- Rental Equipment	\$ (1,170.00)
	- Rental Fee	\$ (975.00)
	- Ribbons	\$ (27.92)
	- Secretary Fees	\$ (1,997.35)
	- Total Agility Expense	\$ (10,036.13)
Total		\$ 2,230.87

DENVER SAMOYED RESCUE

DSR Fundraisers:

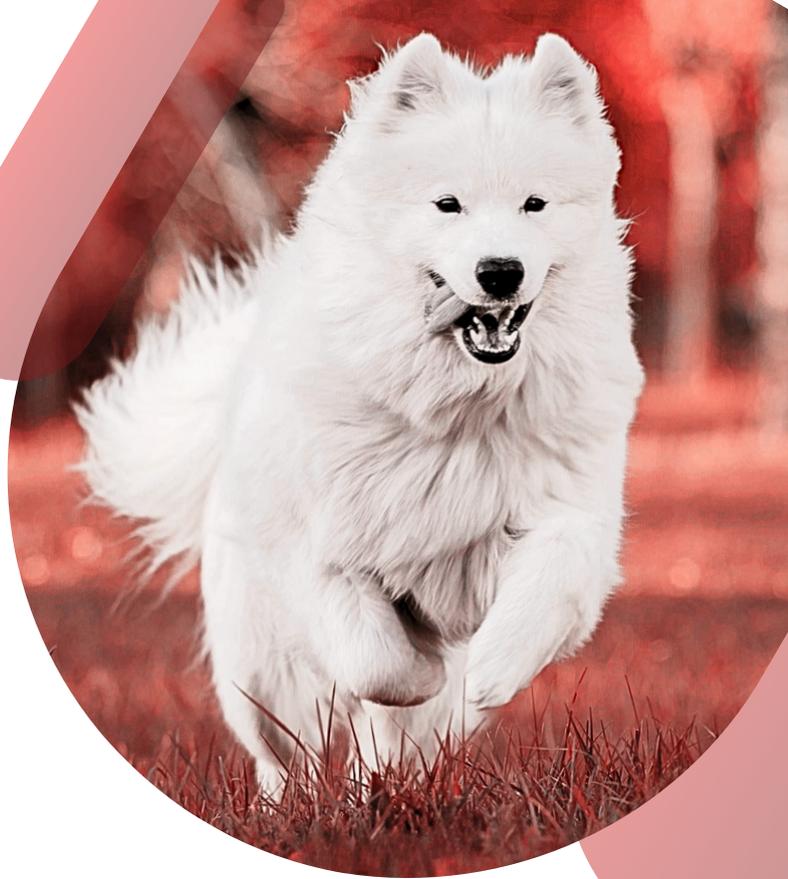
Microchips - \$20 for members, \$35 for non-members. Cost includes chip and enrollment fee.

To make an appointment: Pam Buhl, 303.915.1725; Linda Kitman, 303.794.7136; Pam Arnold 719.337.3686



FAST & FURIOUS

AKC Fast CAT Event



HOSTED BY THE DENVER
SAMOYED ASSOCIATION

Administrative & Secretary Service by HarmonyDogSports, LLC

**Pre-entries open
1/16 at 8am MST & close
2/13 at 9pm MST**



Scan for
premium list &
registration
or visit

**SATURDAY 2/28 &
SUNDAY 3/1, 2026**
9am-3pm

ARAPAHOE PARK
4450 Indiana St.
Golden, CO, 80403

<https://harmonydogsports.com/upcoming-events/denver-samoyed-association-fast-cat/>

Letter of appreciation to DSR from San Francisco Rescue



SAN FRANCISCO SAMOYED RESCUE, INC.

P.O. Box 4215
San Rafael, CA 94913-4215
rescue@sfsr.org
www.sfsr.org

Leave a message for us via National Samoyed Rescue:
Toll Free (888) 677-7263 (SAMS)

“Bridging the Gap Between Homelessness and a Loving Family”

January 22, 2026

Denver Samoyed Association, Inc
Rescue Fund
Longmont, CO 80501

VIA E-MAIL: samoyedrescue@msn.com

Dear Denver Samoyed A,

Thank you very much for your donation of \$1000 dated 8/18/2025. San Francisco Samoyed Rescue is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization founded in 1974 to render help to needy or displaced Samoyed dogs. The objective of this group is to rescue Samoyeds in shelters or lost in the streets, relocate Samoyed that are no longer wanted or that can no longer be cared for by their owners, assist in securing veterinary attention for injured or sick Samoyeds, and assist owners who cannot afford veterinary care.

Thank you also for all who donated for our fundraisers through Facebook in 2025. Per Facebook, you should have received an official donation receipt directly from PayPal Giving Fund in your e-mail for these wonderful donations!

Thank you again for helping our rescue efforts. Your support of our mission is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Helm". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Joan Helm
Treasurer

Bringing Clarity to Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome — and Momentum to the Science Aging Dogs Deserve

How do you determine when a dog has Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CCDS), sometimes called “doggy dementia”?

For families with an aging dog, the question is deeply personal. Subtle changes, such as disorientation, disrupted sleep, house soiling, and clinging more to you, can be heartbreaking and worrisome.

Is this simply normal aging? Or is it something more?

In human medicine, Alzheimer’s disease is diagnosed through a multi-layered process that spans physical and neurological exams, cognitive testing, advanced imaging, and biomarkers that detect disease-specific proteins. Over the past 15 years, a shared, modern framework defining Alzheimer’s disease stages has enabled earlier and more accurate diagnoses, sparked collaboration, improved care, and opened new pathways for research.

In dogs, the story has been very different.

Until recently, veterinarians had no consensus guidelines for diagnosing CCDS, meaning diagnoses could vary widely based on individual experience. Clinicians lacked reliable tools to tell normal aging apart from true cognitive decline. Without standardized criteria, research into age-related cognitive changes in dogs has lagged behind human medicine—not because CCDS is rare, but because a solid scientific framework for studying it systematically was missing.

That is now beginning to change.

A Defining Moment for Research on Aging and Cognitive Health in Dogs

In August 2025, a team of 12 top veterinary and scientific specialists convened in Raleigh, North Carolina, under the leadership of Dr. Natasha Olby, a veterinary neurologist at North Carolina State University. With support from the AKC Canine Health Foundation, these experts came together to issue the first-ever medical consensus statement that defines how CCDS is diagnosed, and it gives the entire field a shared framework to advance care and research.

“We took a step back and asked, ‘How do we diagnose this condition?’” Dr. Olby shared. “Then we built a consensus about what we can currently say about diagnosis, to create a framework for much more accurate guidelines in the future.”

That framework represents a turning point. In December, the group’s work was published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, marking the first-ever consensus in veterinary medicine for diagnosing and monitoring CCDS.

“We have just started the process for CCDS,” Dr. Olby noted in an NC State University article, “but our definitions should help unify the clinical and research worlds in their efforts to understand more about this common, age-associated syndrome.”

Unification matters. When clinicians and researchers speak the same language and dogs are diagnosed using standardized criteria, discoveries accelerate. Studies become comparable, treatments can be evaluated with more rigor, and—most importantly—dogs and the people who love them benefit sooner.

Why Diagnosis Has Been So Difficult

CCDS does not announce itself clearly. As the consortium wrote in their publication:

“Signs are insidious and nonspecific, structural MRI changes emerge late, normal versus pathological decline is difficult to distinguish, and comorbidities further complicate interpretation.”

In other words, CCDS hides in plain sight. Its early signs often mirror normal aging, arthritis, sensory loss, or other common conditions in senior dogs, meaning early changes are frequently overlooked until the disease is advanced. Without agreed-upon diagnostic criteria, veterinarians have relied largely on exclusion, clinical experience, and owner observations—important tools, but not enough to drive early detection or propel large-scale research forward.

These criteria aren’t the final answer; rather, they give the field a common place to begin.

Why This Matters – and Why It Matters Now

Human Alzheimer’s disease research surged once the field established clear disease definitions, standardized diagnostic criteria, and biomarker-based frameworks. That same trajectory is now possible for dogs.

When donors invest in foundational science like this, they aren’t just supporting incremental change—they’re opening a whole new chapter in canine cognitive research for aging dogs. Clear diagnostic criteria mean earlier detection, smarter studies, and, ultimately, interventions that help aging dogs live fuller, healthier lives.

This is what emerging science looks like at its most powerful: collaborative, bold, and capable of changing the story for good.

And it is only possible because people who love dogs believe their later years deserve as much scientific attention as their earliest ones.