

Northern Illinois Rat Organization  
**BYLAWS AND CONSTITUTION**

**Mission Statement** NIRO is an organization dedicated to improving the rat fancy through careful and responsible breeding, encouraging proper care and ownership, educating the public about the merits of rats as companion animals, and sharing ideas with others in order to broaden the collective knowledge of all fanciers.

**Article I The Club**

Section 1. The name of the Club shall be: Northern Illinois Rat Organization, also referred to as NIRO.

Section 2. The objectives of NIRO shall be:

- (a). Encouraging responsible ownership and breeding
- (b). Education
- (c). Promoting the rat fancy with publicity and ethical example

Section 3. This club shall not be operated for profit. No part of any profits or residues from dues or donation to the Club shall inure to the benefit of any one 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 subscribe to the purpose of NIRO. There shall be three (3) types of membership:

(a) Regular: Any person who has reached the age of 18 shall be a regular member with full privileges from the date of membership.

**Single:** Open to all persons eighteen years of age or older who hold regular voting privileges.

**Household:** Household membership shall be defined as two adult persons residing at the same address. Each household member shall have individual voting rights.

(b) Junior: Open to persons 10-17 years of age. Junior members cannot vote or hold office. A junior member may convert to regular membership upon reaching his/her 18th birthday.

(c) Breeder Trial: Any applicant who maintains a rattery at the time of applying for NIRO membership shall be placed on a 6-month trial membership following approval of the voting membership. During the 6-month trial, the applicant may attend NIRO meetings and events but will not be granted any voting privileges. At the first meeting following the conclusion of the 6-month trial, the applicant will be discussed and voted on. If accepted, the applicant will then pay dues and be a voting member of NIRO.

Section 2. Dues

Dues are payable on or before the 1st day of July each year. During the month of May, the Treasurer shall send to each member a statement of his/her dues for the ensuing year. Membership of applicants elected after April 1st shall be extended through the following year. Membership dues shall be set annually by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the Board. An affirmative vote of 2/3 of the board shall be required to change the dues amount. Notification of unpaid dues as of July 1st shall be sent by 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 BOD and which shall provide that the applicant agrees to abide by these constitution, by laws and NIRO code of ethics. The application shall state the name and address of the applicant and it shall carry the endorsement of one member in good standing with NIRO. Accompanying the application the prospective member shall submit dues payment for the current year. All applications are to be filed with the Secretary and each application is to be reviewed and read in at the first club meeting following its receipt. At the next meeting, said applicant will be voted upon. Approval requires affirmative votes by 3/4 of the members present. Applicants for membership who have been rejected by NIRO 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 NIRO upon written notice to the Recording Secretary; but no member may resign when in debt to NIRO. Dues obligations are considered a debt to the Club, and they become incurred on the first day of each fiscal year, July 1.

(b). by lapsing.

A membership will be considered as lapsed and automatically terminated if such member's dues remain unpaid 30 days (grace period) after the first day of the fiscal year, July 1st. For up to 90 days after the 30-day grace period, an individual can apply for reinstatement of membership status on a form approved by the Board

(c). by expulsion.

A membership may be terminated by expulsion as provided in Article VI of these bylaws

## **Article III MEETINGS**

### Section 1. Club meetings

NIRO meetings are held monthly. The body responsible for calling club and board meetings is the Board of Directors. Written notice shall be E-mailed by the Secretary at least 3 days prior to the date of the meeting. The quorum for such meetings shall be 2/3 of the current officers, board/BOD. All general members in good standing who attend the meetings shall have voting privileges.

### Section 2. Board meetings

Meetings of the BOD may be held immediately prior to the regular monthly meeting. Written notice of such meetings shall be emailed by the Secretary at least 5 days prior to the date of the meeting. The quorum for such a meeting shall be the majority of the board.

### Section 3. Voting

Each member in good standing whose dues are paid for the current year shall be entitled to one vote at any NIRO meeting at which that member is present. Proxy voting will not be permitted at any NIRO meeting or election.

## **Article IV DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS**

### Section 1. Board of Directors.

The Board shall be comprised of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three other members, all of whom shall be members in good standing. The officers and directors shall be elected for a one-year term. They shall be elected to these terms as provided in Article IV and shall serve through June 31, of the year their terms expire. General management of NIRO's affairs shall be entrusted to the Board of Directors. Any Board member may be removed from office if absent without notice for three consecutive meetings.

## Section 2. Officers.

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

a) The President shall preside at all meetings of NIRO and of the Board and shall have the duties and powers normally pertinent to the office of the President in addition to those particularly specified in these bylaws.

(b) The Vice President shall have the duties and exercise the powers of the President in case of the President's death, absence, or incapacity.

(c) The Secretary shall notify officers and directors of their election to office and shall record and publish minutes, keep a roll of the members of NIRO with their addresses, track all votes taken by mail, and of all matters of which a record shall be ordered by NIRO, and carry out other such duties as are prescribed in these bylaws. The Secretary shall also have charge of the correspondence, notify members of meetings, notify the Board of meetings, and carry out other such duties as are prescribed in these bylaws.

(d) The Treasurer shall collect and receive all monies due or belonging to NIRO. He/she shall deposit the same in a bank approved by the Board, in the name of NIRO. His/her books shall at all times be open to the inspection of the Board and he/she shall report to them at every meeting the condition of NIRO's finances and every item of receipt or payment not before reported.

(e) The Board of Directors shall meet with the officers to carry out general management affairs as relating to the club.

## Section 3. Vacancies.

Any vacancies occurring within the Board or among the offices during the year shall be filled until the next annual election by a majority vote of all the current members of the Board; except that a vacancy in the office of President shall be filled automatically by the Vice President, and the resulting vacancy in the office of Vice President shall be filled by the Board.

## **Article V NIRO YEAR, VOTING, NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS**

### Section 1 NIRO Year

NIRO's fiscal and officer year shall start on June 31<sup>st</sup> and end on June 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year.

### Section 2. Annual Meeting.

The annual meeting shall be held the first Sunday in June of every year. At the annual meeting, the new officers and board members will be announced with their terms starting on June 31<sup>st</sup> of that year.

### Section 3 Election of Officers

The election of Officers and Directors shall be conducted by secret ballot. Ballots to be valid must be received by the Secretary by May 31<sup>st</sup>. Ballots shall be counted by two (2) inspectors of election who are members in good standing and who are neither members of the current Board nor candidates on the ballot provided. The person receiving the largest number of votes for each position shall be declared elected. If any nominee, at the time the ballots are counted, is unable to serve for any reason, such nominee shall not be elected and the vacancy so created shall be filled by the new Board of Directors.

### Section 4. Nominations and Ballots.

No person may be a candidate in a NIRO election who has not been nominated in accordance with these bylaws

(a) During the month of April, the board shall select a nominating committee.

(b) The nominating committee shall present all nominees for offices by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Article VI COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1. Appointing Committees**

The Board may each year appoint standing committees, subject to their final authorization to advance the work of NIRO in such matters as newsletter, shows, ribbons, informational seminars, membership, and other fields which may well be served by committees.

### **Section 2. Termination of Committees**

Any committee appointment may be terminated by a majority vote of the full membership of the Board upon written notice to the appointee, and the Board may appoint successors to those persons whose service has been terminated.

## **Article VII SHOWS**

### **Section 1. Guidelines**

All sanctioned shows held by NIRO will adhere to NIRO show guidelines.

### **Section 2. Quarantine**

NIRO follows a 29 day pre-event quarantine period. Quarantine is to be implemented prior to every NIRO rat show or NIRO event where more than one members' rats will be present. The practice of proper quarantine procedure is regarded as highly important by NIRO. There will be no tolerance for NIRO members, or those attending NIRO events, who do not comply with the quarantine guidelines. All efforts will be made to see that procedures are followed and carried out correctly by anyone attending A NIRO event. Failure to practice proper quarantine procedures can result in suspension or expulsion from NIRO or, if not a member, banishment from exhibiting at future NIRO shows and matches

## **Article VIII DISCIPLINE**

### **Section 1. Charges.**

Any member may cite charges against a member, including Officers and members of the Board, for alleged misconduct prejudicial to the best interests of NIRO or the species. Written charges with specifications must be filed in duplicate with the Secretary. The Secretary shall promptly send a copy of the charges to each member of the Board or present them at a Board Meeting; and the Board shall first consider whether the actions alleged in the charges, if proven, might constitute conduct detrimental to the best interests of NIRO or the species. If the Board considers that the charges do not allege conduct, which would be prejudicial to the best interests of NIRO or rats, it may refuse to entertain jurisdiction. If the Board entertains jurisdiction of the charges, it shall first attempt to resolve the grievance prior to a formal hearing by appointing an arbitrator who will seek to resolve the grievance to the mutual satisfaction of the parties involved. If that fails within ten days from the date that the Board entertained jurisdiction of the charges, the Board shall fix a date of hearing by the Board or a Committee of not less than three (3) members of the Board, not less than three (2) weeks or more than six (6) weeks after. The Secretary shall promptly send one copy of the charges to the accused member by certified mail, return receipt, together with a notice of the hearing and an assurance that the defendant may personally appear in his/her defense and bring witnesses if he/she wishes.

### **Section 2. Board Hearing.**

Should the charges be sustained after hearing all the evidence and testimony presented by complainant and defendant, the Board or Committee may by a majority vote of those present suspend the defendant from all privileges of NIRO for not more than six (6) months from the date of the hearing. And if it deems that punishment insufficient, it may also recommend to the membership that the penalty be expulsion. In such case, the suspension shall not restrict the defendant's right to appear before his/her fellow members at the ensuing club meeting which considers the recommendation of the Board or Committee. Immediately after the Board or Committee has reached a decision, its findings shall be put in written form and filed with the Secretary. The Secretary in turn shall notify each of the parties of the decision and penalty, if any.

### Section 3. Expulsion

Expulsion of a member from NIRO may be accomplished only at an official meeting of the entire Board following a hearing and upon the recommendation of the Board or Committee as provided in Section 3 in this Article. The defendant shall have the privilege of appearing in his/her own behalf though no evidence shall be taken at this meeting. The President shall read the charges and the findings and recommendations and shall invite the defendant, if present, to speak in his/her own behalf. The meeting shall then vote by secret ballot (written) on the proposed expulsion. A 2/3 vote of those present and voting shall be necessary for expulsion. If expulsion is not so voted, the suspension shall stand.

## **Article IX AMENDMENTS**

### Section 1.

Amendments to the constitution and bylaws may be proposed by the Board of Directors or by written petition addressed to the Secretary signed by 1/4 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 recommendations of the Board by the Secretary for a vote within three (3) months of the date that the petition was received by the Secretary.

### Section 2.

The constitution and bylaws may be amended at any time provided a copy of the proposed amendment has been mailed or emailed by the Secretary to each member accompanied by a ballot on which he/she may indicate his/her choice for or against the action to be taken. 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 counted. The favorable vote of 2/3 of the members in good standing whose ballots are returned within the time limit shall be required to effect any such amendment.

## **Article X DISSOLUTION**

### Section 1.

NIRO may be dissolved at any time by the written consent of not less than 2/3 of the members. In the event of the dissolution of NIRO, other than for purposes of reorganization, none of the financial assets of the club shall be distributed to any members of NIRO, but after payment of the debts of NIRO its financial assets shall be given to a charitable organization for the benefit of rats selected by the Board of Directors.

Bylaws initiated June 2003

Revised May 2007

Revised April 2008