

WALKERS ARE WELCOME NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers



Fact Sheet – Dog Walking

Ross-on-Way, Hereford have produced 'Ben's Favourite Walks' named after a local black Labrador and Director of Ross Walkers are Welcome's Canine Affairs. Elham, Kent have produced information for dog walkers in 'Elham Dog Walking Guide' which is being viewed as a prototype for Kent County Council. We will draw on their experience, laws currently in force and national trends to produce this fact sheet.

As Elham point out, 'the UK is a nation of dog lovers with 23% of households owning at least one dog. It is little wonder then that dog friendly walking routes are in high demand, especially routes where dogs can be let off the lead.' This is not always easy in many rural locations where there is extensive livestock farming and therefore a walk booklet offering suggestions for dog walking together with some practical advice and legislation is even more valued.

Dog Fouling

Starting in Falkirk, Scotland and spreading nationwide is the '**Green Dog Walkers Scheme**' which aims to spread the word about clearing up after your dog in a non-confrontational way led by the example of scheme volunteers. Volunteers wear a green dog walkers (GDW) armband or their dogs wear the green GDW lead/collar which signifies that they have "taken the pledge" to always:

- clean up after their dog
- wear the armband or put the GDW collar / lead on their dog when walking their dog
- carry extra dog waste bags
- be happy to be approached to give a dog waste bag to those without
- be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up after their dogs

Following on from 'poop scooping', there have been schemes spray painting pavements with a small stencilled 'Scoop that Poop', or marking offending areas with flags or loads of posters. A particularly nice phrase used on Kirkby Stephen leaflets is "there's no such thing as a poo bag fairy" which is also on small posters and gives a nicer image than a drawing of an offending pile. Some nature reserves are trying to adopt a "stick and flick" policy which prevents the need to provide bins to be emptied and can be used where there are no farm animals. All these ideas try to raise awareness and hope to encourage dog owners to clear up after their pet making everywhere nicer and safer for all. Poo bags can be placed in dog bins or litter bins.

Non uniformed officers will carry out enforcement within **Dog Control Order** areas in relation to dog fouling and in addition, will also enforce in respect of some littering offences. They will obtain evidence relating to breaches of the legislation, which will result in the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices of £75/£80. This may lead to a potential fine of £1,000 for a second dog fouling offence and £2,500 for a second litter offence or failure to pay the Penalty Notice. A Dog Control Order area is within 200 metres of a public highway which is subject to a speed limit of 40 miles per hour or less. Your local authority will have a list of sites. Commonly dogs are not allowed off the in Dog Control Order areas but visitors may not be aware of this fact as signing is very rare these days.

We mention health because there are quite a few diseases that can be spread in dog faeces. Toxocariasis roundworms live in the digestive system of dogs and cats. The worms produce eggs which are released in faeces. Regularly treating your pets for worms can prevent the spread of the disease. It is for this reason that dogs are often banned from children's recreational areas. Children should wash their hands when they have been playing outside although everyone is susceptible to not only this disease but many others: a long list including Orf, Cryptosporidia, Ringworm and Giardiasis.

Dogs can be host to the Neosporosis parasite which causes cows to abort. There is no cure and can only be prevented by keeping infected dogs away from cattle and ensuring that cattle do not come into contact with their faeces. The host animal is unlikely to show symptoms. Similarly dogs should not be allowed to eat raw meat to pick up these or other parasites.

Of increasing concern in the countryside is the spread of the Sarcocystosis parasite in dog faeces. Eaten by sheep this can cause illness and death but more importantly in early stages sheep carrying the disease are not allowed into the food chain leading to extensive financial losses for farmers. Just imagine a single infected dog regularly visiting a farmer's field could lead to the loss of the farmer's breeding stock and lambs. There is currently no cure. It is not surprising that some farmers do not welcome walkers with dogs.

Sheep worrying

The majority of sheep worrying takes place with a single rogue dog allowed to run wild, although any dog out of sight of its owner may chase sheep particularly if not trained otherwise. Sheep have a habit of running and many dogs have a natural instinct to chase them or want to play with the lambs, this is not acceptable. There are occasionally serious sheep attacks and any responsible dog owner would be aware if their animal was guilty. More often we see cases where the owner just didn't realise the harm that a dog chasing sheep can do.

Cattle attacks

From the opposite perspective, we hear increasingly of cattle attacking walkers with dogs. Many people do not know how to behave around cattle and may even react increasing the danger to themselves. A herd of cattle with young calves will attack what they see as a threat to their young, a dog may be mistaken for a wolf or predator. Young cattle in groups are inquisitive teenagers and will run towards walkers out of curiosity or because they are used to humans providing food. Don't put yourself in danger. If you are worried, do not enter the field. If threatened by cattle, let your dog off the lead and send it away from you. A dog can outrun cattle leaving you to make a safe exit before calling the dog back. Whilst it is easy to say, cattle usually respond to being firm with them but they are very heavy and potentially dangerous animals. Milking cows are usually docile.

On or off the lead

Local bylaws and **Dog Control Order Notices** (introduced with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005) will specify where dogs must be kept on leads, dog dirt picked up and where dogs are not permitted e.g. recreational parks and playgrounds. This is usually in urban areas and if there are not usually any notices, you should ask rather than risk a fine or upsetting local people.

On **Public Rights of Way** (PROW) dogs are defined as a 'legal accompaniment'. There is no general requirement for dogs to be kept on the lead but dogs are required to be under control at all times. When your dog's obedience is questionable, it is advisable to keep your dog on a lead. If you or your dog depart from the PROW, you are trespassing and the landowner has the right to ask you to return to the designated path. It is not that long ago when dogs allowed to run off footpaths were threatened with shotguns and farmers might take action if their animals are in danger.

Since 2005 we have had **Open Access Land** where there is a right to walk. This is usually uplands, moorland and registered common land. There is a requirement to keep dogs on leads, less than 2m in length to protect ground nesting birds 1st March to 31st July. Dogs must also be kept on a lead in the vicinity of livestock (see cattle attacks above). Don't forget dogs should always be under control which will necessitate eye contact at all times, as you never know what might be out of sight. Open Access Land can also hide bogs, rock crevices and cliffs and is also susceptible to fast changing weather conditions.

Allowing walkers onto private land where there is not a PROW is termed as **permissive access**. This is a gesture of goodwill by the landowner and often falls under a stewardship scheme or nature reserve. The landowner makes their own rules and will have notices at the point of entry.

Off lead exercise is widely permitted in some **Forestry Commission Woodlands**, dog bins are provided but care should be taken if there are deer or other animals. **Woodland Trust** and other **public**

woodlands and **Nature Reserves** may exclude dogs permanently or temporarily to protect wildlife and usually have notices dictating the behaviour expected. This might include pick up or “stick and flick”. Remember that if you are lucky enough to have **beaches**, these will usually come with some restrictions for dog owners particularly at different times of the year.

Additional information is available:

Dogs in the vicinity of horses: British Horse Society <http://www.bhs.org.uk/>

Dogs in the countryside: Natural England
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

Dogs in the vicinity of cyclists: Sustrans <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/>

Countryside Access produce a leaflet that is currently out of print
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/30048>

Happy Dog Walking

With all these regulations and advice it is hard to find where walkers with dogs are welcome. Visitors will find your area even more confusing or frustrating if they are not aware of your local bylaws and where livestock are likely to be. This is where some local advice and walking with dog publications can be invaluable to visiting walkers.

You might also consider adding details of where bins are located, pet shops and animal supplies and the local vet or RSPCA’s address and telephone numbers. Some areas will have day kennels and café’s that welcome dogs that may be included or give opportunities for leaflet sponsorship. There is often dog friendly accommodation and pubs that might help to sponsor your leaflets with a donation for an advertisement. Make sure that there are a few dog friendly retail premises that will have a hook on the wall and a dog water bowl outside.

Legislation may vary in Scotland and Wales.

March 2015

While the WAWTN has made every effort to ensure the information obtained in this factsheet is an accurate summary of the subject as at the date of publication, it is unable to accept liability for any misinterpretation of the law or any other error or omission in the advice in this paper.

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