
PETS POLICY (DOGS, CATS, AND OTHERS) – LOVE YOUR PET BUT BE RESPONSIBLE



This Policy is essentially concerned with dogs and cats, but may refer to any pets or animals in your care. You should treat all animals in your care properly at all times to keep them healthy and stress-free, always ensuring that they are not a nuisance to others. Remember, you, the owner, are responsible for your pet and what it does.

The issues that arise with pets on open spaces are broadly:

- Fouling;
- Predation or disturbance of wildlife;
- Damage to vegetation/digging;
- Aggression towards other pets or people;
- Noise;
- Strays.

Fouling, especially by dogs, is probably the issue that riles everyone the most and sadly it is increasing. Dog-owners who are strict about always clearing away faeces understandably become incensed when other irresponsible and anti-social owners allow their dogs to defecate, and then leave the faeces behind to be an unpleasant nuisance and health risk, especially to children.

We have a zero tolerance of people who do not clear up after their dogs and we will pursue offenders in law. If you see someone offending, please tell us and we will take action. Various measures are open to us including those under legislation such as the *Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014*, if necessary. We also have access to options such as DNA fingerprinting, although it is not fingers that are in question in this case!

If there is a special bin for pet faeces and a hygienic bag dispenser on your site, please use them. Otherwise, take the offending material home with you to be disposed of properly. Do NOT leave the faeces of your dog on our land.

Cats are less of a problem as they tend to bury their faeces in soft earth or sand. This can be a significant nuisance where there are flower beds, though, or temporary piles of sand and similar materials. Please, therefore, ensure your cat has a litter tray at home and do not leave it out at night.

Predation or disturbance of wildlife should not be a problem with dogs as you must always keep dogs on leads on our land. Never allow your dog to attack, dig, enter

burrows, get into ponds or streams or otherwise disturb wildlife. Never leave your dog at home unattended for long periods – use a reputable kennelling facility.

Cats are a much bigger issue as they are natural and efficient predators. The Mammal Society has estimated that the UK's cats catch up to 275 million prey items a year, of which 55 million are birds, with the rest comprising mainly small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish, and that is only the ones they knew about and were able to record! This has become such a problem in some parts that cat ownership has been banned where there is very sensitive wildlife. We know how much people love their cats and we have not taken that drastic step, but we do insist that cat owners take full responsibility for their pets. This means:

1. Fit a bell on an elasticated collar to your cat and ensure it rings when they move and is kept in good condition, replacing as and when necessary.
2. Keep your cat in at night. It is imperative that you do this because cats are naturally nocturnal hunters.
3. Provide a litter tray rather than letting them outside to excrete.
4. Keep a watchful eye your cat, play with them every day and ensure they are well fed with premium meaty food, content and comfortable.
5. Walk your cat on a leash.
6. Do not leave your cat unattended for more than a few hours when you are away. Provide a safe and secure environment in the house or a properly designed enclosure. If you are away for longer, such as on holiday, leave your pet with a responsible friend or in a well-managed cattery, ensuring the guidance here is followed by them.

You can find more help on, for example, the RSPB's internet advice pages: (<http://tinyurl.com/pzpg6fl>).

Damage to vegetation/digging. This applies mainly to dogs (though see cats and faeces above, and avoid letting your cat damage tree trunks and stems by using them as scratching posts). As long as you obey the rules and keep your dog on a lead under your control, you should not have any problems. Please do not allow them to damage plants, chew plant stems and young saplings, or dig.

Aggression towards other pets or people. Again, this is largely a dog-owner's issue. Most dogs are friendly but they can be aggressive towards other dogs, cats & other animals, and children or sometimes adults. Aggression towards children can be a particular concern. So, to repeat, KEEP YOUR DOG ON A LEAD AND UNDER YOUR FIRM CONTROL AT ALL TIMES. If your dog is unruly, obtain proper training for them and yourself. If an incident were to occur, especially involving a child or a traffic accident, it could have very serious consequences for you as the owner. Please be aware that this may also apply if you let a child out with your dog and the child cannot control it. Any dog that is known to be inclined to bite or snap must be fitted with a muzzle when taken outside the home.

Noise is similarly a dog-related problem, although cockerels and mynah birds have been known to engender complaints! You must not cause a nuisance by allowing your dog to bark unreasonably or howl as some do. If this is something that your pet does, seek professional help from a qualified dog handler. There are various devices on the market that are said to train dogs not to bark and without distress to the animal, but we would always recommend you take professional advice. A Government leaflet is also available at: <http://bit.ly/2wAtKeX>.

Strays. If you find or notice a stray or feral cat or a stray dog, be aware that it may not be a stray at all and its owner or home may be near-by. If you are sure the animal is a stray, or feral in the case of a cat, report it to the Council if a dog (web site information at www.gov.uk/report-stray-dog, or for a cat you may be able to get advice from the RSPCA or Cats Protection: <http://bit.ly/29A3PZ8>, www.cats.org.uk/).

Please remember

- *Keep dogs on leads at all times*
- *Always clear up after your pet.*
- *Fit cats with a bell on an elasticated collar, walk them on a long leash, always give them premium meat-rich food and play with them every day to mimic hunting behaviour (feather ball on string) which reduces predation.*
- *Never leave cats out at night.*
- *Take responsibility for your pets at all times.*



Please remember that your pet can carry diseases. Fleas lice, ticks and worms can be readily controlled – please ask your vet. There are particular microbiological and parasitic dangers relating to cat and dog excrements (faeces and urine). Never allow children near animal faeces, always clear up using disposable gloves and maintain scrupulous personal hygiene.