

Improving the image of dogs in our communities

The Canine Community Code



What is the problem?

Dog behaviour in the UK is changing dramatically:

- Animal charities report more and more behaviour problems with dogs that they take in.
- In the years 2014-5, a staggering 6,740 people required hospital admission due to dog-related injuries (The Health and Social Care Information Centre). It is estimated that dogs injure over 200,000 people in the UK every year. This number is steadily rising.
- There are increasing numbers of control orders restricting or banning dogs from certain public areas.



Your dog does not have to act aggressively for you to fall foul of the law. If it is out of control, and as a result, a person or another animal is injured you could end up in court or even go to prison.

How does this affect dog owners?

You may think that it is only dogs that display aggression in public that cause problems. This is not the case! In a recent court case a dog was playing with another dog in a public park. During the game it ran into a person, knocked them to the ground and injured them. The owner of the dog was ordered to pay compensation to the victim because of the injuries they sustained. The Judge, in summing up the case, stated, "The owner was not able to demonstrate any control over his dog which basically ran around doing as it pleased".

Dogs off lead in a public place and out of control may be dealt with under the Dangerous Dogs Act of 1991. This act has recently been tightened up by the government.



We already have four banned breeds - we don't want more added to the list. We must ALL act in our communities in order to improve the image of dogs in the UK.



How do we improve the image of dogs in our communities?

It is up to ALL of us, as dog owners, to try to stop dogs getting a bad press because of lack of control. We need to demonstrate that our dogs are not a nuisance to the public at large. We are asking all owners who take their dogs into public places to abide by a voluntary code of conduct. This Canine Community Code would apply to you and your dog when you are in a public place:

- 1. Don't let your dog off lead unless you can demonstrate a really reliable recall. If you cannot call your dog back to you instantly, it means your dog is out of control. This is the first thing a court appointed expert on dog behaviour will look at if you fall foul of the law.*
- 2. Do not allow your dog to approach dogs who are with their owners and under control on a lead. Your own dog may well be friendly but you should never assume that the owner and dog it is approaching would welcome this. The law allows the owner of the dog on a lead to take whatever steps are deemed to be necessary to prevent another dog bothering them!*
- 3. When walking on public footpaths or pathways you should keep your dog in sight all of the time. Out of sight means out of your controlling influence. If you cannot see the path ahead then your dog should be walking closer to your side or else on the lead.*
- 4. Only allow your dog off lead to play with other dogs if the other owners have agreed to this and all owners can demonstrate good control over their dogs.*
- 5. Reserve dog treats for your own dog. Feeding other people's dogs can encourage them to approach you and others in the expectation of getting food and can encourage some to jump up.*
- 6. Be polite and put your dog on a lead when you see another person approaching either with or without another dog so that your dog is under control as you pass by.*
- 7. Respect the rights of others to use public areas for recreation. Never allow your dog to bother others. Train your dog to be under good control both on and off the lead.*
- 8. Find out what public areas do not allow dogs and those that impose lead restrictions. Abide by these laws and dog control orders. Your local dog warden should be able to advise you.*
- 9. When walking your dog in town, always position your dog closest to the building line when possible, with you closest to the centre of the pavement. This allows other pedestrians to pass freely without having to manoeuvre past your dog.*
- 10. Dogs should not pass one another nose to nose. When walking on the lead and passing other dogs always position your dog so that you and other owners pass with the dogs on the outside.*
- 11. Take out third party insurance on your dog to guard against situations when things go wrong in which case you could end up with a hefty bill.*
- 12. Please take with you some means of cleaning up after your dog but DO NOT take your dog into a public area in the hope that he will eliminate in public! Your dog should eliminate in an appropriate place, preferably on your own property before you leave the house.*

What if we do nothing?

It is likely that government will act to address the problem of out of control dogs in public places and we may lose access to the areas where we exercise our dogs. We must all work together to earn the right to keep these areas by being responsible owners who keep our dogs under good control.

If you need to gain more control over your dog, contact your local dog trainers for help and advice. Your dog warden, veterinary surgery, or an internet search will give you a list of trainers in your area.

Please pass this information on to every dog owner in your community, if we all act together we can make a difference and hopefully retain our right to exercise our dogs in public areas.