



Rights of Way

# A guide for dog owners and walkers

## How can I contact my Rights of Way Team?

Somerset County Council's Rights of Way Team is here to help you resolve any rights of way issues you may have. If you would like to discuss or report a problem on a public right of way, please contact us by:-



Visiting our website. [www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/rightsofway](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/rightsofway); or



Telephoning 0845 345 915.

Somerset County Council's Rights of Way Team have produced this guide in partnership with:-



The Blackdown Hills  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



To find out more about the Kennel Club's Good Citizen Dog Scheme, visit [www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)



This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc.



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# A guide for dog owners and walkers

## How do I contact my local Dog Wardens?

All of Somerset's District and Borough Councils have a dedicated team of Dog Wardens. They do all they can to promote responsible dog ownership.



[www.mendip.gov.uk](http://www.mendip.gov.uk)



01458 448822



[www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)



0845 4082546



[www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk)



01935 462462



[www.tauntondeane.gov.uk](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk)



01823 356356



[www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk](http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk)



01643 703704

## DID YOU KNOW....?

There are four categories of public rights of way. They are public footpaths, public bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. Dogs are permitted on all public rights of way as long as they are kept under close control.



Mendip Hills AONB Team

## A guide for dog owners and walkers

If we receive reports that that a dog has acted aggressively or dangerously out of control we will informally ask the owner of the dog to resolve the problem the best way possible. Sometimes, we may have no other option than to report the incident to the Police or local Dog Warden. They may well pay you a visit and advise you how to keep your dog under proper control. Unfortunately, if you're not able to keep your dog under control, your local Dog Warden may have no other option than to resolve the matter formally by taking appropriate enforcement action.



### Training your dog

Walks are always so much more fun if your dog comes back to you when called, walks to heel and doesn't pull on its lead. The Kennel Club's Good Citizen Dog Scheme offers you a fun way to train your dog so it's obedient and well behaved. It's the biggest dog training scheme in the country.

The Kennel Club can provide you with a list of classes in your local area. To find out more, you can contact the Kennel Club by:-



[www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)



[gcds@the-kennel-club.org.uk](mailto:gcds@the-kennel-club.org.uk)



020 7518 1011

### DID YOU KNOW....?

There are over 7.5 million dogs living in this country and they produce over 10,000 tonnes of poo a week - enough to fill 4 Olympic sized swimming pools. It is anti social not to clear up after your dog and if you're caught leaving dog poo behind in a designated area, you could be served with a fixed penalty notice.

Walking keeps you and your dog happy and healthy. Did you know that walking only 30 minutes every day makes you feel good, gives you more energy, helps to reduce stress, can lower blood pressure and helps keep your heart in good working order.



Grant Turner

**DID YOU KNOW....?**

Walking, is one of the most popular recreational activities in Somerset. One of the main reasons people go out walking everyday is to exercise their dog.

# A guide for dog owners and walkers

## Dogs and Public Rights of Way



Devon County Council

Many of Somerset's public rights of way cross fields used by farmers to grow crops or graze their animals. On the whole, they welcome people walking their dogs on these rights of way so long as they are kept under close control and their owners clear up after them. Unfortunately though, we often receive complaints about irresponsible dog owners that have not cleared up after their dog and let them chase farm animals and wildlife or damage crops.

This guide's been published in partnership with the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association and Somerset's Dog Warden teams and explains how, by following a few simple steps, you and your dog can enjoy Somerset's beautiful countryside.

**DID YOU KNOW....?**  
The Kennel Club's Good Citizen Dog Scheme is the largest dog training scheme in the UK. Training is a fun way of developing a real lasting bond between you and your dog. It also means that when you go out for a walk, you can trust your dog to be obedient and well behaved. You can find out more from the Kennel Club's website [www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)

Somerset's rights of way network provides you with thousands of kilometres of footpaths, bridleways and byways for you to walk your dog. If all of these rights of way were laid end to end they would stretch from the centre of Taunton, across the Atlantic Ocean to New York on the east coast of America.

## Dogs and Open Access Land

Across Somerset, there are approximately 16,300 hectares of moor, heath and down that are designated as Open Access Land. Your dog can accompany you on your walk across these areas provided:-

- It is kept on a lead of no more than 2m long between 1st March and 31st July. This will help prevent your dog disturbing ground nesting birds; and
- You keep your dog on a lead when approaching livestock.

Owners of Open Access Land can apply to Natural England for a restriction to exclude dogs. Normally, restrictions are only granted where a landowner has demonstrated dogs need to be excluded to protect wildlife or for land management purposes. Further information about restrictions can be downloaded from [www.openaccess.gov.uk](http://www.openaccess.gov.uk). If your dog isn't able to accompany you across Public Access Land, don't worry, you can still take your pet for a walk along any nearby public right of way.

## Working and farm dogs

Farmers and landowners also have a responsibility to ensure their working dogs and pets are well controlled. Aggressive, protective or loose dogs can be very intimidating. In extreme cases, your dog may scare people to the point they double back on themselves rather than continue on their walk. Worse still, your dog may attack a well loved pet or seriously hurt someone.

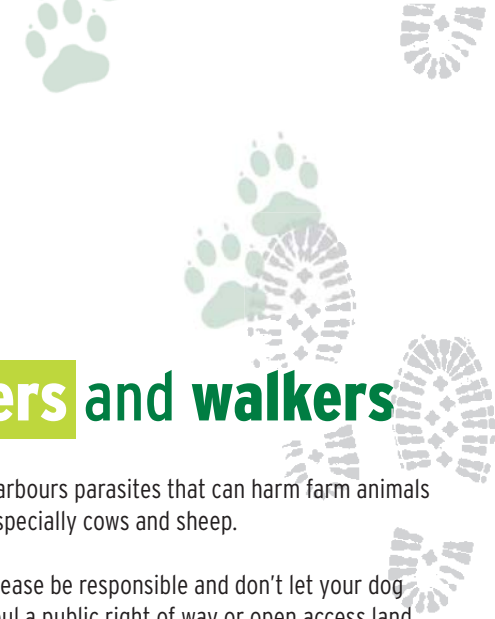


George Monague

We ask all landowners to do everything they can to make sure their dogs are kept under close control at all times. After all, you can never tell when someone might be using a public right of way crossing over your land or through your farm.



# A guide for dog owners and walkers



## Could my dog disturb ground-nesting birds?

Yes. Dogs running loose off a public rights of way can disturb wild animals and ground nesting birds. During the nesting season between April and July keep your dog close to you or on a lead, especially if you're walking across moorland and fields, through forests and woodland or along the edges of fields or shores. If your dog is running loose and out of sight off a path, it could accidentally damage a nest, trample fledglings or scare off their parents leaving the young birds to starve. If you come across a nest, please don't let your dog disturb it.



Countyside Team, Somerset CC

### DID YOU KNOW....?

It is an offence to allow your dog to worry or attack livestock. As a last resort, a person is legally entitled to shoot a dog if they can't stop it chasing or worrying their livestock.



Quantock Hills AONB Team

Dog walkers reporting an incident to the Police

## What could happen if my dog is considered dangerous or out of control?

If your pet dog is considered to be dangerous, aggressive or out of control it can be reported to the police or local Dog Warden. If they've received a report they will probably pay you a visit and advise you how to keep your dog under proper control. Unfortunately, if you're not able to keep your dog under control, your local Dog Warden may have no other option than to resolve the matter formally by taking appropriate enforcement action.

## Is dog poo a serious problem?

Yes it is. The UK's dog population excretes roughly 10,00 tonnes of poo a week. That's enough to fill four Olympic sized swimming pools!



South Somerset District Council

## Why do I need to clear up after my dog?

By clearing up after your dog, you can prevent the spread of some very nasty infections and diseases. Dog mess can contain one million microscopic Toxocara Eggs. Toxocaris is highly infectious, especially to children. Typical Toxocaris symptoms include dizziness and nausea, asthma and epileptic seizures. More seriously, it can lead to serious eye damage, even permanent blindness. Dog mess also

harbours parasites that can harm farm animals especially cows and sheep.

Please be responsible and don't let your dog foul a public right of way or open access land. It is very easy to train your pet to go in your garden before taking it out for its walk. If your dog is caught short, please clear up its mess and dispose of it in a dog bin. If there isn't a bin near by, please don't leave it behind. Instead, you could dispose of it safely at home by double wrapping it and putting it in your standard household refuse.

### DID YOU KNOW....?

Recent research shows dog fouling is considered to be a serious problem by people living and visiting Somerset.



South Somerset District Council

## DID YOU KNOW.....?

Somerset County Council's Rights of Way Team looks after one of the longest rights of way networks in the country. If all of Somerset's rights of way were laid end to end, they would stretch from Taunton across the Atlantic Ocean to New York a distance of almost 6000km.



# A guide for dog owners and walkers

## Should I worm my dog?

Yes. Regular worming is a very important part of your dog's life. If your dog has never been wormed, pop along to your local vet and they should be able to prescribe a course of treatment that will help prevent infections and diseases from spreading. You can also buy worming tablets over the counter from your local pet shop.

Although worming will help prevent the spread of disease, please continue to clear up after your dog. Leaving dog poo behind is simply anti social. Think about it, there's nothing worse than having to wash dog mess from the sole of your shoes or from your hands if you're a wheelchair user.

## What could happen if I don't clear up my dog's mess?

If you don't clear up after your dog, the county's Dog Wardens and Community Police Officers can serve you with a fixed penalty notice. If you don't pay the fixed penalty notice, you could be prosecuted and, if found guilty, fined a maximum of £1,000 in the magistrate's court.

## Why is it important to keep my dog under close control?

Dogs are naturally inquisitive, especially around livestock, other dogs and people. You may know your dog is friendly, but can other people be so sure as they see your dog running towards them?



The Countryside Code highlights that your dog should be kept under close control. There's no definition what close control actually means, but it's good practice to ensure your dog is trained to respond to your commands and walks close with you. If your dog wanders off out of sight and doesn't come back when called, then it should be walked on a lead.

## What should I do if I come across livestock while out walking my dog?

If you meet farm animals while out walking it's probably best to put your dog on a lead and leave as much space between your dog and the animals as possible. Sheep will often run away but cows can be very inquisitive and suspicious of dogs, especially when they have their calves with them. If cows do start acting aggressively, it's best to let go of your dog and let it run free to safety while you leave the field as quickly as you can.



## DID YOU KNOW.....?

Between April and July your dog could disturb ground nesting birds. Please keep your dog in sight under close control or, if necessary, on a lead if walking in areas where you're likely to come across nests.

While you're out, especially around lambing time, you may come across a sign politely asking you to put your dog on a lead. If you see one of these signs or a farmer asks you to put your dog on a lead please do so. What a great way of showing what a responsible dog owner you are.

## What could happen if my dog chases or worries livestock?



Always bear in mind that it is an offence to allow your dog to worry or attack livestock and remember, as a last resort, a farmer is legally entitled to shoot a dog if they can't stop it chasing or worrying their farm animals. A loose out of control dog could cause a pregnant ewe to miscarry or cause a newborn lamb to be separated from and rejected by its mother. As a responsible dog owner please do everything you can to make sure no one has to protect their livestock by destroying your dog.