IRELAND
leave no trace

How to Enjoy the Outdoors Responsibly with your Dog

Spending time in the outdoors with your pet is a rich and rewarding experience. Read on to see how you can spend this time responsibly to avoid or reduce your impacts.

Plan ahead and prepare

When bringing your dog outdoors always bring a lead and dog waste bags. Check access to the area prior to your walk. Some beaches, parks, woods etc. may have local 'rules' such as dog-friendly off-lead areas, or dogs allowed only on a lead, or the area may forbid the entrance of dogs entirely.

Consider other outdoor users when walking your dog

Some people are very frightened by dogs and may suffer great anxiety if approached by an off lead dog. Over-friendly dogs can knock small children off balance when trying to say hello! Other dog walkers may also be upset by an out of control dog causing stress to their own pet.

Respect Farm Animals

Dogs should be kept on a lead at all times around farm animals, and where there are signs restricting entry with dogs, these should be respected.

Sheep and lambs suffer high levels of stress if chased by a dog. This can result in the death of the sheep, even in situations where there is no apparent physical injury.

Take care around cattle, especially bulls and cows with calves as they can become aggressive towards dogs that enter their space. If cattle react aggressively and move towards you – keep calm, drop the lead as the dog will escape from the cattle, and take the shortest route out of the field. In this situation not letting go of the lead puts you at a high degree of risk.

You are liable for injury or damage caused by your dog to people or livestock. A farmer has the right to shoot a dog that they consider is worrying livestock.

Be Careful around wildlife

A dog running free in an ecologically sensitive area can cause a lot of damage by chasing wildlife or even attacking young animals like fawns, leverets and seal pups.
Aquatic birds, especially over-wintering shorebirds, are vulnerable and may become exhausted and die if disturbed by dogs. Consider that the cumulative effect of many dogs, each causing a little disturbance, over the course of a day will impact on a bird's ability to feed, rest and preen, all of which are vital for its survival.

Ground-nesting species of birds are also particularly vulnerable to off-lead dogs. If parent birds leave the nest, the eggs become cold and the chicks may die as a result.
Once a dog starts a chase it is unlikely to come back when called unless it has been properly trained. Training a dog at an early age is most successful.

Pick up after your dog

Dog faeces is unsightly and messy when stood in, so please pick it up and dispose of it in a bin. Always carry waste bags with you when walking your dog. Dog Faeces can cause diseases such as Toxocariasis which can damage eye sight in humans. It can also cause infections in wildlife and serious illness in livestock. Neosporosis, passed from infected dogs can result in abortion in cattle. Coenuriasis or 'Gid', a fatal disease attacking the brains of sheep is also transmitted through worms passed in dog faeces where the dog has scavenged on an infected sheep carcass.

Be Responsible

If your dog is in an area where it is allowed to be off-lead and which is also safe for the dog, it should still be kept under control at all times. This means your dog is always within sight and will return when called.

Take responsibility for your dog by worming it regularly, keeping its vaccinations up to date, having it micro-chipped and ensuring it wears an ID tag at all times.

Practice recall with your dog at home to help you both learn good control for when you are out and about. Your dog will also enjoy the game and the attention.

Look up dog-friendly areas near you or in the area you are visiting and please try to consider other visitors, wildlife and farm animals, and enjoy a healthy, happy time with your dog. Responsible dog ownership makes the outdoors experience better for everyone.

For more information on dogs in the outdoors please visit:

www.leavenotraceireland.org

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Leave No Trace Ireland is an educational charity dedicated to promoting responsible use of the outdoors through education, partnerships and research.

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