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Walking your dog outdoors is a great way to get healthy and is an enjoyable form of exercise for both you and your dog.

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Enjoy the Great Outdoors

A guide for responsible dog owners





Other People

Some people, especially young children, can be very frightened by dogs – even the friendliest tail wagging pet! Horse riders, cyclists and runners can be easily startled by a dog and vice versa. You can help by keeping your dog on a lead.



Other Dogs

It is best to keep your dog on a lead in the vicinity of other dogs unless their owners clearly are happy that your dog approaches them. Dogs do not always act predictably in the presence of other dogs.



Wildlife

Ground nesting birds in open land can be scared from the nest by even the friendliest of dogs just doing a bit of sniffing around. This is especially the case in spring and summer so it is important to keep your dog on a lead. If parent birds leave the nest, the eggs become cold and the chicks may die as a result.

Some rare birds, particularly shore birds, are very sensitive in winter and may become exhausted and die if they are disturbed frequently.

Deer can be very sensitive to dogs especially when they have young and when chased can die from exhaustion.

Keep an eye open for signs that highlight any information about wildlife.



Farm animals/livestock

Keep your dog on a lead around all livestock.



Sheep and lambs

Sheep and lambs are very vulnerable to dog activity and again they will view even the friendliest of pooches as a predator and be very nervous of it. Being chased by a dog causes a very high level of stress among sheep and lambs and can easily result in their death.

Keep dogs on a lead at all times in the vicinity of sheep and lambs.



Cattle

All cattle, especially bulls and cows with calves, can be very aggressive towards a dog, as they will consider it to be a predator. **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 safest route out of the field.** In this situation not letting go of the lead puts you at a high degree of risk.

A farmer has the right to shoot a dog that he/she considers is worrying livestock.



Dog Mess!

Many people are aware of the importance of clearing up dog mess in urban settings so that no-one steps in it but think that it's fine to leave it in the outdoors. However, it is equally important to clear up your dog's mess in the countryside as this can cause infections in people or wildlife and can cause serious illness and death in livestock.

For example, worms from dogs' mess can cause 'gid' which is a fatal disease that attacks the brains of sheep. All dogs should be wormed regularly and all mess removed.

Information on the best places to go and enjoy the outdoors with your dog can be found on the following websites:

WalkNI.com BeachNI.com

