

## **Dog fouling on playing pitches and a 'dogs on leads' policy**

### **Introduction**

- Complaints have been received in the office regarding dog fouling on public open spaces, particularly on playing pitches: <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/24238787.dog-poo-left-behind-swindon-sports-field-causes-anger/>
- WYFC, Men's Saturday Football Team, and the Cricket Club have all confirmed that dog faeces on the pitches is a significant problem.
- A recent men's football game was stopped as the away team were unhappy about the amount of dog faeces on the pitch.
- All the sports clubs now walk the pitches and pick up by hand the dog faeces before playing.

### **H&S Risks**

- Dog faeces contains very high levels of a wide range of pathogenic [disease forming] micro-organisms; bacteria such as salmonella, campylobacter, MRSA, E-coli and parasitic organisms such as cryptosporidium.
- A single gram of dog faeces can contain up to 23 million such organisms, more than enough to cause disease and infection.
- All of these organisms can survive for long periods (1-2 years) in soil.
- Dog faeces is the primary source of Toxocariasis in humans – particularly when in close contact with soil. Children are especially vulnerable. This is a dangerous, unpleasant and potentially blinding disease caused by the eggs of toxocara canis (roundworm). As with the bacterial infection, a very small quantity of faeces can contain many eggs.
- Scooping up dog faeces from grass does NOT act as an adequate safety precaution (any more than would scraping it up from a carpet and then letting a baby play on it...).
- Toxocariasis: Possible symptoms of toxocaral infection range from aches, dizziness and nausea to asthma and pneumonia, but as these symptoms can all be caused by other things, infections often go undiagnosed. In the UK there are around 100 cases of toxocariasis diagnosed each year. In rare cases eye disease and loss of vision can be caused when the toxocara larva passes through the eye.  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/toxocariasis/>
- Research on the internet suggests that toxocara eggs are not infectious until they embryonate. This is usually at least 2 – 3 weeks after they have been deposited by a dog. Therefore freshly deposited faeces is not infectious, and you can safely clear up after your dog.
- Research also suggests that the fox is considered to be a significant host for T-canis in the UK and, therefore, the presence of foxes needs to be taken into account when control of toxocariasis is being considered. However, research suggests that foxes will not defecate in open spaces, and the debate that states that toxocariasis in humans is as much due to foxes as dogs is misleading. It is believed that the majority of infections arise from parks and play areas where foxes would not defecate.
- Dog faeces can carry nasty parasites that could cause infections if accidentally swallowed or if the dog poo comes into contact with an area of broken skin, such as a graze or a cut;  
<https://metro.co.uk/2022/03/01/dog-faeces-on-pitch-cause-rugby-player-lifelong-health-infection-16198188/>

## The law

- According to the litter charity, Keep Britain Tidy, anyone who fails to clear up after their dog can be issued with a fine of up to £100 and if it ends up in a court case, that can rise up to £1,000. (Please see note below on PSPOs.)
- The law states that being unaware a dog has done a poo or not having a suitable bag is not a reasonable excuse. NB: Registered blind dog owners cannot be fined.
- Following the implementation of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, local authorities in England and Wales can no longer make Dog Control Orders. Instead they can use new powers under the new Act to control dog fouling by issuing Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to require owners to clean up after their dogs in specified public areas. In accordance with the DEFRA guidance, local authorities can use PSPOs in a similar way to dog control orders, to stop anti-social behaviour such as dog fouling in a public place. PSPOs can make it an offence if dog owners do any of the following: don't clean up after their dogs; allow their dogs to enter particular places that have a PSPO, like playgrounds or parks. If a PSPO is not complied with, the person in breach of it can be fined up to £100 on the spot or up to £1000 if it goes to court. HOWEVER, any organization MUST go through a statutory process including consultation before a PSPO can be made. A PSPO must then be enforced, so it requires officers to be available to enforce it. The idea is that they effect behavior change, they are not an income stream.
- NB: to enforce a PSPO and issue an FPN/ fine, would need the person committing the offence to provide their name, address etc, or someone to provide a witness statement. The majority of time in Swindon, where PSPOs exist(ed) the incidents were dealt with by way of words of advice. This is why even when PSPOs exist, not many FPNs are issued. If a large number of FPNs are issued, then the PSPO isn't working to effect behavior change, and it is therefore unlikely to be renewed. PSPOs must be reviewed every 3 years to see whether they are effective. For more information on PSPOs please see:  
[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.21%20PSPO%20guidance\\_06\\_1.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.21%20PSPO%20guidance_06_1.pdf)

## Recommendations

1. **Implement a 'dogs on leads policy' on all public open space in Wroughton.**
2. **Grounds Team to mark on plans/ maps the main entrances to all areas of public open space in the Parish.**
3. **Delegate to the Clerk/ Deputy Clerk in consultation with the Chair & Vice-Chair the authority to get sufficient signs to install at the main entrances to all areas of public open space in the Parish, and delegated authority to agree the locations for the signs.**
4. **Office staff to get quotes for signs with WPC logo, office phone number & website; text to read:**  
***'Dogs must be kept on a lead and away from marked playing pitches at all times.***  
***Dog poop contains harmful bacteria and organisms dangerous to adults & children***  
***so please be responsible and clean up after your dog.'***
5. **Office staff to do a week of fb posts to alert residents to the new policy, and inform as to the reasons why.**