

New Forest Professional Dog Walkers' Charter

Introduction

Owning a dog can bring significant health and wellbeing benefits to its owner and their family. Part of this usually comes from walking the dog, and the New Forest National Park is a very popular place to do this, especially for local people. Dog owners also sometimes choose to pay a professional dog walker to walk their dog – there are many such businesses operating in the New Forest.

This level of dog walking alongside other types of outdoor recreation in such a beautiful, tranquil place, with rare wildlife, protected habitats, livestock, farming and forestry operations, makes it vitally important that everyone adopts best practice.

Professional dog walkers are commercial businesses and usually walk multiple dogs at once, so they have an additional duty to operate responsibly. They also have an excellent opportunity to set a positive example to other dog walkers. However, there are currently no national regulations for commercial dog walking, except where it is done as part of a day care or home boarding service.

All professional dog walkers that operate in the New Forest National Park are therefore encouraged to abide by the best practice standards set out in this Charter. It combines the New Forest Dog Walking Code (for individual dog walkers) with additional elements relevant to commercial businesses.

It is supported by all the organisations on the New Forest Dogs Forum: New Forest National Park Authority, **New Forest District Council**, **Test Valley Borough Council**, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, **Forestry Commission**, Hampshire Constabulary, Commoners Defence Association, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, **National Trust**, Friends of the New Forest, RSPB, Verderers of the New Forest, **Bird Aware Solent** and **New Forest Dog Owners Group**.

We also recommend that dog walking businesses should be familiar with the Professional Dog Walkers' [Guidelines](#) published by the RSPCA in January 2019, since they have a broader scope than the New Forest Charter.

Operate the business in a professional manner

1. Have appropriate insurance for your business, including public liability cover.
2. Walk a maximum of six dogs at once¹.
3. Carry a lead for each dog in your care.
4. Ask the landowner whether you need permission to operate a commercial business on their site and if any charges or additional regulations apply.
5. Park only in designated car parks, not on a verge or in a gateway.
6. Ensure you comply with Government legislation on the [licensing of activities involving animals](#), [welfare of animals during transport](#) and [welfare of dogs](#).

¹ In line with the [Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(England\) Regulations 2018](#) under section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006

7. All dogs must wear collars with ID tags with the owner's name and address. Add a tag with your contact details when you walk them.
8. Carry a canine first aid kit and be able to administer basic dog first aid; ensure you have contact details for emergency veterinary care close to where you walk.
9. Keep informed of things that might affect where and when you walk in the New Forest (e.g. temporary car park closures, bird nesting information and events) and details of training and development opportunities.

Stay safe and respect the environment

1. Keep dogs on leads in and around car parks and alongside roads.
2. Do not allow dogs to chase or attack livestock, deer or any other wildlife.
3. Keep your distance from grazing animals, especially mothers and their young.
4. Release your dogs if threatened or chased by cattle, ponies or other animals to get to safety separately.
5. Keep the dogs to the main tracks when birds are nesting on the ground (usually March – July).
6. Throughout the year, avoid disturbing coastal birds by exercising your dogs away from them.
7. Keep well away from any work taking place such as forestry and pony round-ups, and observe warning signage.
8. Dogs must always be under effective control when on a public right of way (for example through farmland); keep them on the path and do not allow them to stray onto adjacent land.
9. Pick up after the dogs in your care; put bagged dog poo in a dog waste bin or litter bin, or take it home.

Be considerate to other Forest users

1. Always keep all dogs under effective control; if you cannot reliably and quickly call a dog in your care back to you and away from people or other dogs, keep it on a lead.
2. Avoid walking with other dog walkers and in busy areas.
3. Keep dogs from jumping up at or approaching other people, especially children, cyclists and horse riders, and prevent excessive barking
4. Keep dogs away from picnics.
5. Whenever possible move aside to let other walkers, cyclists and horse riders pass.
6. Show respect for other dogs (especially those displaying yellow² as this indicates they need space); if an approaching dog is on a lead, put yours on a lead too.

² Owners of dogs that are timid, or that need space for some other reason, often show this by using a yellow ribbon, coat etc. See [The Yellow Dog Project](#) for further details