

DEXTER PARKS & RECREATION DOG POLICY

Policy Statement

Dog activities are intended to provide a fun and rewarding experience for a dog and its owner/handler. However, despite careful and proper preparation, instruction, medical advice, conditioning, and equipment, there is still a risk of serious injury to the dog, its owner/handler or other persons or animals.

Dogs are pack animals and when “off leash”, even the best-trained dogs may act instinctively. Understandable, not all hazards and dangers associated with dog activities can be foreseen. Certain inherent risks include the propensity of any dog to behave in dangerous ways that may result in injury to persons or other dogs.

Additional risk factors include, but are not limited to, the inexperience, negligence or irresponsibility of a dog owner/handler; the inability to predict a dog’s reaction to sound, movements, objects, persons, or other animals; and actions by the dog due to fright, anger, stress, insect bites, or natural reactions such as jumping, pulling, resisting, and biting. Other risk factors include the hazards associated with environmental and traffic conditions, inclement weather, slip and falls, premises defects, equipment failure, failure in instruction/supervision, and all other circumstances inherent to dog and/or outdoor activities.

The Dexter Park and Recreation Board and the City of Dexter has adopted a “three-strikes” aggressive dog policy, which effectively permanently bans any dog determined to be aggressive from City Parks after three (3) documented incidents of aggressive behavior as defined below. The policy also establishes that dog owners shall be held responsible if their dog bites, attacks, or injures any person and/or other animal.

The City reserves the right to address each incident of aggressive behavior on the complexity and severity of the incident and may exercise its authority to ban any aggressive dog regardless of the number of strikes. Such situations may include aggressive dogs that: (1) kill other animals; and or (2) cause the shedding of blood for any person and/or animal.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is: (1) to establish the City’s three-strikes aggressive dog ban policy; (2) to inform dog owners/handlers of their responsibilities and City rules and regulations; and (3) to describe the procedure of reporting any potential and/or witnessed aggressive dog attack.

Definitions

Aggressive dog: An aggressive dog is one that on City premises or at City activities, makes or repeatedly attempts to make aggressive physical contact with any person or any animal. “Aggressive physical contact” is contact that is potentially harmful or dangerous to persons or pets. Some examples might be, but are not limited to, the following:

- Snapping
- Growling
- Charging or Lunging
- Raising Hackles
- Biting

Any person who believes s/he experienced or witnessed an act of dog aggression may fill out a written incident report.

Leash: Leash means a cord, rope, strap, or chain which shall be securely fastened to the collar or harness of a dog and shall be of sufficient strength to keep such dog or other animal under control.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone using or entering on the Dog Park and other City Parks.

Committee

The Dexter Park and Recreation Board shall appoint two (2) members and the Dexter Dog Park Committee shall appoint one (1) member to the Dog Committee to investigate whether or not an incident occurred at the Dexter Dog Park or other City Parks, to determine whether or not a dog shall receive a “strike” for prescribed behavior, and to decide whether a dog shall be penalized for the aggressive behavior. In the event the two members fail to reach an agreement on a penalty, the Dexter Park Coordinator shall make the decision.

All Dog Owners/Handlers are responsible for: (1) supervising their dogs; (2) understanding that they and others who accompany them are participating in this activity at their own risk (and risk to their dog); (3) determining if they and/or their dog are physically fit and/or adequately skilled to use Dexter Dog Park; and (4) complying with this policy.

Procedure

A. General Rules and Regulations: Off-Leash Dog Area Hours are the same as City Park hours.

1. All dogs must have rabies tags attached to their collars or proof of current vaccines. 2. Owners/handlers are legally responsible for the behavior/action of their dogs. The dog owner/handler agrees to assume the full risk of any injuries, damages, or loss connected with the use of the Dexter Dog Park. 3. Aggressive dogs are not allowed. 4. Female dogs in heat are not permitted in the Off-Leash Dog Area. 5. Dogs must not enter the transitional area when occupied by other dogs. 6. Owners/handlers must carry a leash at all times; leash their dogs at the first sign of aggression and leave the Off-Leash Dog Area immediately. 7. Leashed dogs are not allowed. They may create a problem. 8. Muzzled dogs are not allowed. 9. Owners/handlers must keep their dogs in view and under control at all times. 10. Children must be closely supervised. 11. Gate must be latched at all times. 12. Food and treats are prohibited. 13. Dogs must be at least 4 months or older to enter Off-Leash Area. 14. Owners/handlers must clean up feces of dogs. 15. All City ordinance, state statues, and this policy shall apply to the use of the Dexter Dog Park. 16. Dexter Dog Park Committee is responsible for the Off-Leash Dog Areas and will police areas.

B. Three-Strikes Aggressive Ban Policy: The Dexter Park & Recreation Board and the City has adopted a three-strikes aggressive animal ban policy. This means that, in general, after three (3) documented aggressive incidents involving the same dog, the City will ban said dog from any City property permanently.

Strike One Penalty: If the Dog Committee determines the dog has committed its first act of aggressive behavior, said dog will be banned from City property for a period not to exceed six (6) months. **Strike Two Penalty:** If the Dog Committee determines a dog has committed its second act of aggressive behavior, said dog will be banned of City property for a period not to exceed twelve (12) months. **Strike Three Penalty:** If the Dog Committee determines a dog has committed its third act of aggressive behavior said dog will be permanently banned from all City property.

C. Reporting Dog Biting/Attacks:

(1) All individuals that witness aggressive dog behavior should inform the Dog Committee and/or Park Coordinator. (2) Individuals that witness any animal attack, and/or strange or aggressive behavior, are requested to provide documentation for example: pictures, witness statements and/or contact information, etc. (3) After an incident has been reported, the Dog Committee will respond to the dog park and/or conduct a prompt investigation which may include:

a. Interview all witnesses. b. Interview dog owner/handler involved and/or injured by another dog (or other animal). c. Photograph and/or document any injuries to any dog, person, or other animal. d. Examine and record all permit and/or license information for all involved dogs or other animals. (4) Prepare a report that summarizes the report and action taken.

D. Training Requirements: (1) All relevant/necessary City staff and Committee members should be trained on this policy.

Donations

All donations of personal property to the Dexter Dog Park shall be and remain property of the City of Dexter.