Keep Your Dog On A Leash: An Important Civic Duty

There are many important reasons to keep your dog on a leash while in a public space like Lake Roland Park. First, it's the law! County code requires animal owners to have control of their pets when in public, otherwise it is considered "at-large," and may be subject to a $30 fine for the first offence. Subsequent offences receive a $150 fine.

What are some ways an off-leash pet can be harmed? Sadly, unleashed dogs may become the victim of a moving automobile. You never know when a dog could chase a deer or squirrel in the street or parking lot!

Dogs can also encounter other hazards, both natural and man-made if allowed to explore off-leash. Wild animals pose a risk to off-leash dogs in the form of rabies vectors, but many sick or injured wildlife can injure a dog who is not under the control of its owner. Dogs can also ingest or drink harmful substances if left to discover the outdoors unattended.

Oftentimes, off-leash dogs can be a threat to one another. Their owners may also be injured when attempting to break up a fight between two or more off-leash animals. Dogs that bite a human may be subject to quarantine, additional fines, and/or civil litigation.

Off-leash dogs can harm the environment in a few ways that are not immediately obvious. Dog waste that remains uncollected can contaminate soil and bodies of water. Plus, who wants to step in it! Off-leash dogs can disturb local wildlife dens and nests when roaming. A dog's scent is also a deterrent to wildlife who will leave their habitat due to the presence of off-leash dogs. Since the construction of Paw Point Dog Park at Lake Roland and animal at-large enforcement, wildlife such as beaver, otter, and mink have returned in greater numbers.

When animals are off leash, numerous problems may arise that may harm the animal itself, other animals or people, and even the environment. County code enforcement seeks to mitigate these occurrences, but voluntary compliance to these rules is the best way to ensure our public spaces are safe and enjoyable for everyone.

BALTIMORE COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS

—Matthew Hand

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