

DOGS ON WALKS

Pursuant to consultation with the LDWA insurers and consideration of relevant health and safety and environmental law, the National Committee has agreed the following guidelines on dogs on walks:

- The decision to allow dogs on walks rests with the walk leader or walk organiser.
- If dogs are excluded from a walk solely because that is preference of the walk leader then Assistance dogs must be allowed, except where dogs are prohibited on permissive paths, in wildlife protection areas, or where there are over-riding health and safety issues.
- If the walk leader decides to accept dogs on a walk then he/she should check with the dog owners that each dog is covered by liability insurance. If the dog owner confirms verbally that this is so then the dog may be allowed on the walk. If there is no liability insurance then the dog will be excluded (for this purpose, verbal confirmation of having such liability insurance is treated as a binding agreement to this stipulation, thereby waiving any liability of the LDWA resulting from or related to any dog without such liability insurance).
- If dogs are not allowed this will be made clear in all published information, including *Strider*. We recommend 'No dogs allowed' where all dogs are excluded, and 'Assistance dogs only' where it is the walk leader's preference to exclude dogs.
- If there is no notification about dogs in *Strider* then members attending do so on the understanding that dogs are allowed on the walk.
- The walk leader can insist that the dog be on a lead for all, or certain, sections of the walk.

From August 2013 *Strider* onwards we will include two dog related entries in the walks programme:

'No dogs allowed' means no dogs at all. This can only apply where there is a valid reason, for example access rights that prohibit dogs, terrain (for example if there was a rock scramble using ladders) or nature (for example nesting birds on moorland). For the purposes of clarity, this is not an exhaustive list.

'Registered Assistance Dogs only' demonstrates that the walk leader does not want dogs on the walk, but assistance dogs will still be permitted.

These guidelines are given on the basis of discussion with LDWA insurers, who have summarised their position in the notes reproduced below:

Dogs on Walks

The decision on whether or not dogs are permitted on an LDWA walk is up to the individual groups or leaders.

It is the responsibility of the leader to make certain the dog owner keeps it under close control, especially on farmland, and on a short lead near livestock.

Assistance dogs such as hearing or guide dogs are allowed on all suitable walks.

As noted above dogs may be permitted on walks where there is no problem with terrain or livestock and if the leader is comfortable with dogs.

Some walks won't be suitable for dogs (for example when the route covers a particular type of terrain, young farm animals are present, subject to quarantine i.e. Foot & Mouth) and the ultimate decision on whether to allow dogs lies with the individual group or walk leader.

Some groups may make the decision not to allow dogs on any walks but we would encourage groups to allow dogs wherever possible as is often the case that people may join the LDWA in order to walk with their dogs.

Insurers recommend that all dogs are kept under close control at all times, and kept on a lead on roads, near livestock or sensitive wildlife, where the terrain requires careful footwork and wherever the law or other official regulations require it.

Dog owners must ensure their dog does not alarm other people and they must clean up after their dog at all times. Walk leaders must remind dog owners of their responsibilities at the start of the walk.

Dogs on walks do not affect the insurance cover in any way but incidences caused by dogs are not covered by the LDWA insurance policy. Therefore, it is very important that the dog owners are aware of this and have their own Pet Owners Liability insurance cover in place.

Pet Insurance should include 'Third Party Liability' insurance which pays towards compensation and costs awarded against the owner by a court if the dog causes death or injury to a person, or causes damage to someone else's property. The walk leader should specifically ask, 'Does this pet have liability Insurance?' and only accept the dog on the walk if the owner verbally confirms this.

Please note:

It is very important that the local groups or leaders make it very clear in advance to all members or walkers when a dog is not welcome on a particular walk. It would be unacceptable for LDWA members with dogs to turn up for a walk and be turned away.

*Perkins Slade Ltd
January 2013*

Tips for Dog Owners

If you own a dog and are not sure whether you have 'liability' (sometimes called 'third party') insurance these tips might help:

1. Third party dog insurance is often included in house/contents policies, and can usually be added for a small premium if not.
2. It is usually automatic on dog health insurance schemes, but these can be expensive and are likely to exclude cover if cover is already included on a house policy (always check the small print).
3. One of the cheaper ways to get third party only cover might be to join the Dogs Trust.

(Please note these are intended to be helpful tips only. The LDWA is not qualified to give insurance advice. It is your responsibility to check your cover and to research and choose cover that is appropriate for you.)