

Taking the Lead

Information sheets

Linked resources:

- Managing access with dogs to reduce impacts on land management
- Case studies
- Advice and useful links

Find them at:
outdooraccess-scotland.com

Introduction



This set of information sheets has been produced to provide summary guidance on key topics related to managing access with dogs and reducing impacts on land management.

By providing guidance on the principles and practicalities, the information should help those working to address local issues. It should be stressed that any examples given illustrate what has been done in specific locations and should not be regarded as models to be applied in all other apparently similar situations.

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Developed in partnership with:





Information sheet 1

Highlighting dog fouling problems

Dog fouling is a problem common throughout Scotland. As well as being unpleasant for others trying to enjoy outdoor access, dog faeces can carry diseases which affect humans, farm animals and wildlife. Concerns about the health risks associated with dog fouling are greatest in fields where cattle, sheep and other animals are grazing, and in fields where fruit and vegetables are growing.

One option to highlight the extent of the issue and the cumulative effect that irresponsible dog walking is having on a popular route and immediate surroundings (say 5 metres on either side of a length of the path) is to use fluorescent chalk-based spray paint or flags to identify each incidence of fouling. This approach has helped reduce dog fouling by 75% in some places.



What the law says

The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 requires dog walkers to remove any faeces left by their dog in a public open space. Failure to do so can result in a fixed penalty fine or prosecution. There is no legal requirement on dog walkers to clear up after their dogs on agricultural land, or other land outwith the definition of “public open space”, although most responsible dog walkers would choose to do so if they were aware of the impacts.

Where to use flagging or fluorescent paint spraying

- Paths or areas with persistent unacceptably high levels of dog fouling.
- Cropped or grazed fields where there are concerns about health risks.
- Other sites where the level of fouling is particularly unpleasant for others trying to enjoy the outdoors.

Before considering this approach, it is worth reviewing the adequacy of bin provision and whether information encouraging people to clear up after their dogs, bag it and bin it is sufficiently clear. If necessary, arrange for more bins to be installed, and provide information that any public litter bin will do.

Timing

- Choose a time of year when flags or spray-paint marking will be visually evident, and when people are most likely to notice the flagging/spraying.

Who else to involve

- Involving local community groups, schools, cubs, scouts or environmental groups can help attract greater media coverage as well as directly raise awareness amongst dog walkers, friends and family of those involved.
- Local dog wardens will often be willing to help organise and promote flagging and spraying events.
- Local police may also be willing to get involved.

What to do

- Fix a date for when you're going to do the fluorescent paint spraying or flagging.
- Decide whether you are going to use spray-paint or flags, or a combination of both, to identify each individual dog poo. Organise the necessary materials, including disposable gloves.
- Issue a press release in advance and do whatever else you can to get local TV, radio and newspapers to cover your story. Media coverage is as important (if not more so) than the flagging and spraying itself.
- Do a formal written risk assessment, particularly if you're involving other people. Some people may object to use of spray paint (particularly if they don't know its biodegradable) but if you plan on using flags, think carefully about the safety risks. You may need to tape off the flagged "crime scene" to avoid someone falling and spearing themselves on a bamboo cane or skewer.
- Put up posters on site explaining what is being done and why.
- Carry out the event, marking each individual poo.
- Remove flags after 2-3 weeks. Paint will biodegrade naturally.

Review whether you need to repeat the exercise annually.

Case studies

Loch Leven National Nature Reserve ran a "flagging up the issue" event to highlight problems of dog fouling. Some of the associated press coverage is available online at <http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/perth-kinross/loch-leven-nature-reserve-flags-up-problem-of-dog-mess-1.89850> and <http://lochlevennr.wordpress.com/2013/04/25/flagging-up-the-issue/>



Information sheet 2 Dealing with dog-related access issues using signs

Why use signs?

- To reduce disturbance to livestock, wildlife or game
- To reduce risk of crop damage
- To clarify what is expected of dog walkers, where and when
- To remind dog walkers of their responsibilities
- To alert dog walkers to specific risks or hazards
- To identify where sensitive areas start and finish
- To remind dog walkers to keep dogs to a path or track
- To help dog walkers make informed decisions and enjoy a conflict-free visit

Key points on using signs

- 1 People respond best to positive, helpful information. Positive endorsement is nearly always more effective than negative “no go” type signs, which many people will ignore and which may conflict with legal access rights.
- 2 Signage needs to be simple, clear, concise and specific. Stick to one message rather than diluting or risking confusing people by trying to put across too much information.
- 3 Explain why you are asking for certain behaviour e.g. associated health risks of dog fouling.
- 4 Make sure the sign clearly explains where and for how long the behaviour is being requested.
- 5 Keep words to a minimum – a single picture, symbol or cartoon is often more effective.
- 6 Humour usually helps, but with serious problems such as sheep worrying or health risks, some access authorities have found that hard-hitting facts are more effective.
- 7 State who is the author of the sign – and preferably provide contact details.
- 8 Remove the sign when it is no longer required, for example when cows and calves have been moved to another field or area.

Remember that signage is only one way of communicating with dog walkers. There may be other more effective approaches.

Question to ask	Guiding principles
Are signs necessary?	Only use where and when needed. Putting up too many signs risks littering the countryside, diluting the message, alienating dog walkers and potentially causing confusion.
Is it clear to which area the sign applies?	Putting up signs at the end of sensitive areas where you expect dogs to be kept on-lead is as important as signs at the beginning, and far more likely to be respected by dog walkers.
Is the sign readily visible?	Brightly coloured signs are more visible. Locate signs where they will be seen, and tailor size to individual circumstances – small signs are easily missed or ignored on a wide track. Position signs so the bottom is at least 0.8 m above ground level and the top is < 1.85 m high.
Is the sign easily legible?	Make sure text and any illustration are big enough for people of all ages to read easily. Dark text on a light background works well, as does white text on a dark background. Avoid using red text which is hard to read and easily fades. Limit text to a maximum of eight words per line. Use an easy to read sans-serif typeface (without the squiggly bits!), using a combination of bold and normal type, and different sizes of the same typeface. Text in upper case is more difficult to read so use both upper and lower case lettering.
Is the message readily understandable by people of all ages and abilities?	Use language which is easy to understand, the minimum of words, and reinforce with a picture wherever possible.
Are dog walkers likely to pay any attention to the sign?	Make the sign relevant to dog walkers. Highlighting the risk of dogs getting lost or injured is more likely to be effective than simply stating the risks for wildlife or farm livestock.
Does the quality of the sign give it credibility?	Tatty signs rarely command respect. Laminated signs are cheap and easy to produce yourself if you have computer access, and will last for several years if mounted on a firm, flat background. Rigid or corrugated PVC, fibreglass or other similar materials are waterproof, lightweight and more durable. Professional signs can easily be ordered online for approximately £20 each.
Does the message comply with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?	To avoid any doubt, check with your local access officer, who will always be happy to help advise and may be able to output signs for you.
Is permanent signage necessary?	Take down signs as soon as a risk has passed, hazard is no longer present, or a field, site or area is no longer sensitive to disturbance by dogs. Who can blame dog walkers for learning to ignore all signs when signs saying “lambing in progress” are left up all year?

Standardised signage templates

Templates have been produced for lambing, young livestock, breeding wildlife and a range of other land management situations. You can choose whether to print out the standard template and then add your own information, or add your own details before printing and laminating.



The templates are downloadable from:

<http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Access-management-guidance/signs>

Alternatively, you may prefer to produce your own signs. Provided signs follow the principles summarised above, dog walkers will often respond better to a locally-specific sign which a land manager has taken the trouble of producing.



The table on page 5 suggests a series of guiding principles that you may wish to use. The examples which follow illustrate how some land managers have applied these principles. None claim to be perfect. The comments below each picture suggest scope for improvement.

Examples of signs about dog fouling



These two signs demonstrate different approaches to a similar issue in different situations. The sign on the left could be improved by incorporating the message “Bag it and bin it” to avoid dog walkers leaving dog waste they have picked up. The sign on the right could usefully also say “Any bin will do” to avoid confusion about which bins can be used for disposing of dog waste.

Examples of signs to reduce livestock disturbance

Signs are more effective if they make it clear exactly what area they relate to so that dog walkers are clear whether they are being asked to keep their dog on a lead for the next field, half mile or whatever. Signs at the far end of the area making it clear where the sensitivity ends will reinforce the message. Some dog walkers don't know what “close control” means, so more specific wording such as “close at heel” is usually better – as on the example below which was used by a crofter on Skye.



Sheep Grazing Close to Cliffs

Please keep dogs on a lead less than 2m or under strict control (walking at heel).

Thanks.

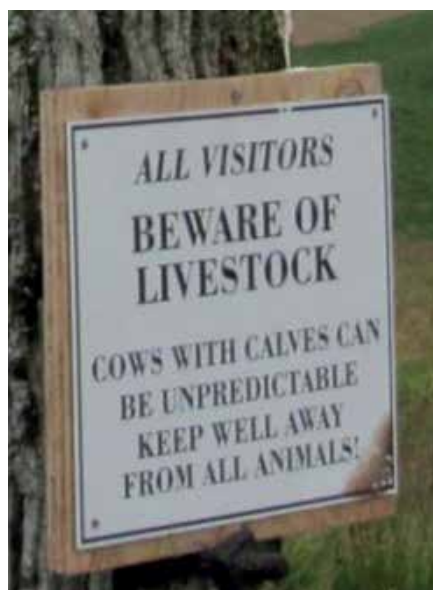
Signs to reduce risks of interaction of cattle and dog walkers

Anyone out enjoying the countryside should accept the likelihood that they will meet livestock. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code advises members of the public to seek an alternative route before entering a field with grazing livestock. Erection of signs saying “cattle in field” or “sheep in field” wherever livestock are grazing would quickly litter the countryside, and signs simply alerting people to animals in a field achieve little. However, in line with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance, it is worth considering putting a sign at any gate or other access point to fields or open areas regularly used for public access where there are cows with calves or bulls at large. Signs should be removed when the animals to which they relate are no longer in that field or area.

The signs below are examples produced at local level where there have been specific issues with dogs and cattle, or where individual farmers have been concerned about liability.



A warning triangle and red outline have been used on these signs to alert people to a potential issue. Use of a picture makes it immediately clear what the risk is. Request to keep dogs on-lead around livestock is clear and simple, so too is advice to let dogs go if chased by cattle.



Remember that upper case lettering is harder to read than a mixture of lower and upper case.

Farm Animals Grazing

Please keep a sensible distance from animals.

Keep dogs well away from livestock at all times and never get between the bull, cows and calves.

Know the Code before you go
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

This sign might also usefully include advice to dog walkers to let the dog go if chased, but signs which are too wordy are more likely to be ignored. As many people won't know what a “sensible distance” means, this sentence could be cut.

Examples of signs to reduce wildlife disturbance



Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) have produced a standard template reflecting best practice in terms of wording and design to help land managers reduce disturbance to capercaillie by dogs. Inclusion of the CNPA logo helps endorse the authority of the sign, a symbol for capercaillie identifies the issue pictorially, and the text includes dates and the area to which the signs relate. Inclusion of landowner contact details helps authenticate the signs.



Loch Leven National Nature Reserve has developed its own variation on signs to reduce disturbance to breeding wildlife. Wording on the signs is designed to encourage compliance by dog walkers by explaining the issue and thanking them for behaving responsibly.



Rothiemurchus Estate produces various signs specific to different parts of the estate, which are attached to a standard board to reinforce estate branding and endorse the authority of the signs. In wildlife sensitive areas, a cartoon figure of a dog is used to attract attention of dog walkers and encourage them to keep dogs on short leads during nesting season. The seasonal signs are erected at either end of sensitive areas, and removed at the end of the period.





Information sheet 3 Public access with dogs at lambing time

Public access by dog walkers can be a particular concern at lambing time. This information sheet provides a summary of the legal position, and advice on what you can do to minimise the risk of any problems.

What the Scottish Outdoor Access Code says

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a right of access for everyone, including individual and commercial dog walkers, to most land and inland water, provided they exercise their rights responsibly. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides detailed guidance on the responsibilities of those exercising access rights. The Access Code says:

“Do not take your dog(s) into a field where there are lambs, calves or other young animals. Go into a neighbouring field or onto adjacent land. In more open country, keep your dog on a short lead if there are lambs around and keep distant from them.”

This means that land managers can take appropriate action to ask people with dogs not to enter fields where sheep are lambing or where there are young lambs. The Access Code does not advise people without dogs to avoid such fields. On unenclosed land, the advice to dog owners should follow the guidance in the Access Code for “more open country” as above.

Once lambs are old enough not to be considered vulnerable, the Access Code asks dog walkers to keep distant from them and says that dogs should be on a short lead or close at heel in fields with sheep, and under close control on open hill ground when there are sheep around.

The Access Code’s guidance for land managers includes:

“Where possible, avoid putting sheep close to lambing in fields where there is a well used route or, if this is not possible, you could indicate a reasonable alternative route.”

Understanding the problem

Most dog walkers' main concern is identifying safe, off-lead access within easy reach of their home. Most will avoid livestock if given a choice and if they are aware of the risks, but many dog walkers simply don't appreciate that dogs can cause serious problems in the weeks immediately preceding and during lambing time, even if kept on-lead. Disturbance of heavily pregnant ewes by dogs can lead to abortion. After lambing, ewes easily become distressed in trying to protect and defend their lambs, which can affect milk yield and put dogs at risk if the ewe becomes aggressive. From the farmers' or crofters' perspective, separation of lambs from their mother is also a serious issue. Dogs not under proper control can still cause problems of mismothering even when lambs are older, and the problems can be equally as serious on hill ground as in enclosed fields.

Land managers have an important part to play in reducing the risk of any problems associated with dogs at lambing time by clear, effective signage, and thinking carefully about which ground is used for lambing. In-byre or fields close to the steading are the obvious choice because they are most readily accessible and easiest to keep an eye over. Fields such as these are often also those under most pressure for public access, particularly around the edge of towns or villages, or where access to popular hill walks or other attractions is through enclosed fields.

Taking the lead in avoiding issues with dog walkers at lambing time

LAMBING
From
24/03/2012
to
30/04/2012
sheep are lambing in this field.
Do not enter with dogs
Know the code before you go,
thank you.
Your dog doesn't know any better
Make sure you do
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

- Where practical, and where space allows, consider avoiding lambing in fields heavily used for public access with dogs.
- Erect signs during lambing at relevant gateways to remind walkers that they should not enter fields with lambs if accompanied by a dog. Keep the sign clear and simple, including dates so dog walkers know how exactly when the restriction applies. Templates which can be edited and printed can be downloaded at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Access-management-guidance/signs. Remove signs at the end of lambing.
- Identify and clearly sign alternative routes avoiding fields in which sheep are lambing.
- Explain to dog walkers you meet when you are out and about why dogs are a particular issue at lambing time, and help them identify alternative more appropriate routes or places to exercise dogs off-lead during lambing.
- On apportionment or other larger enclosures used during lambing, signs erected at gateways should alert walkers to the issues and ask dog walkers to keep their distance and to keep dogs on a short lead whilst in the enclosure.
- Where unenclosed ground is used for lambing, or ewes and lambs are turned out onto open ground soon after lambing, erect signs asking walkers, cyclists and horse riders to keep as far as possible from sheep, and for dogs to be kept on a short lead. Remember to take the signs down at the end of the period specified to encourage people to read and respect signs.

Ewes and lambs

**There are ewes with very young lambs
in this enclosure from
1st April to 15th May**

which are particularly sensitive to disturbance.

Please keep your distance and keep dogs on a short lead until the next gate. Thereafter keep your dog under control and a sensible distance from grazing animals.

Thank you for your consideration.
North Talisker Sheep Stock Club

This sign is a good example of providing clear, polite information. Clarification of what “sensible distance” means would be better still.

This real-life example of a sign from Skye demonstrates suitable wording, which could be improved further by asking for dogs to be kept close at heel to avoid any misunderstanding as to what close control means.

Sheep lambing

**Lambing takes place on these hills from
1st April to 15th May. During this period dogs
are a particular concern because ewes may
panic, resulting in separation of lambs from
their mothers, leaving them cold, hungry and
exposed to predators. To help avoid this please:**

- Keep well away from sheep and lambs
- Keep all dogs on a short lead or under close control

Thank you.

Responsible access is welcome here.