

NEIGHBORLY DOG OWNER GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage dog owners to respect individual and common property, as well as to ensure the safety of all residents.

The leash law in Wake County was put in place to prevent children and adults from being bitten by dogs. Even without an incident that makes the news, having dogs wandering off leash, or charging and barking at passersby, gives the appearance of an unsafe neighborhood for children.

Dog ownership comes with many responsibilities. Included in these responsibilities is the consideration of others in your community.

DOG WASTE

Dog owners should always carry a dog waste bag and always pick up after their pet. Make sure that anyone who walks your pet carries a bag and picks up waste. Ideally pet owners should attempt to have their dogs “do their business” on their own property or in a common area. Some neighbors prefer that pet owners never allow their dogs to use their property and

whenever possible you should respect their wishes. A suggestion would be for these property owners to post a sign asking dog owners to keep their pets off their property. It is not always possible to control the biological needs of canines.

DOG BARKING

It is not impolite for neighbors to let dog owners understand when their dog's barking is becoming a nuisance, but many neighbors are hesitant to do so.

Dogs bark for many reasons. Some dogs have been unknowingly conditioned to seek attention. Others bark out of boredom or frustration. Frequently a barking dog is either alerting its owner of a "threat" or attempting to deter a "threat." The dog owner should not ignore these signals.

In general, barking is triggered by environmental stimuli like scents, noises, movement, animals, vehicles, and passersby. Some chronic barkers lack mental or physical stimulation and a simple change to their daily routine can help decrease their barking. Your dog may be barking for any or all of these reasons. And that can mean barking on and off throughout the day.

Needless to say, dogs left outdoors unattended risk becoming a nuisance. Dogs that bark very frequently or for extended periods of time should not be left out in the yard or even in an

open screened in porch. A responsible dog owner will make an effort to restrict this behavior.

DOG WALKING ETIQUETTE AND BEST PRACTICES

Except in an approved dog park, all dogs, even dogs who are friendly and obedient need to be leashed at all times. Wake County enforces leash laws. When a dog is off leash, they are at risk of getting hit by a car, getting into a confrontation with another dog, running off after another animal or potentially having a negative interaction with a person.

Leashes are designed to assist you in controlling your dog and keeping them safe when out in public. Dogs on leash can be leash reactive, meaning that they appear more defensive and bark more often at others. Many see this reaction as a dog being protective. Leash reactive dogs should be kept a good distance from other dogs and people. Training can be implemented to encourage eye contact with the owner instead of oncoming people or their pets.

Not all dogs like other dogs, and even if YOUR dog likes everyone, the other person's dog may not. It is best to ask in advance (from a safe distance across the street) to see if the other person wants to have a dog interaction before crossing the street to do so. If a person declines, please respect that they may be saying that to protect their pet and yours.

Remember, some individuals in the neighborhood simply don't like to be near dogs and some are actually fearful.

When you are out jogging or just taking a stroll in the neighborhood, never walk up behind a dog being walked by their owner. This could spook the dog and owner. It is best to cross the street or make yourself known prior to coming too close. A dog owner may need time to appropriately manage their dog and coming up unknown from behind does not give them that opportunity.

Retractable leashes are not advisable because they limit the owners' control of their pets. This is especially true with large dogs that can easily break free from a retractable leash. Loosely leashed dogs can wander onto your neighbor's property, may lunge at cars or deer or even get into snakes or wasp nests.

Wearing headphones while walking your dog in the neighborhood is not a good idea. Dog walkers should always be aware of automobile traffic, joggers, and other dog walkers. They should control their animals on a short leash in these situations. Folks who drive their cars, trucks or trailers by a dog walker should pay attention, obey the speed limit and when safe, allow the walker extra space.

It is important that everyone who may walk your dog can control it. A younger person may not have the ability to do this,

especially if the young person is inexperienced handling dogs in various situations, or if the dog is strong or difficult to manage.

ELECTRONIC DOG CONTAINMENT

Neighborhoods that discourage traditional fencing for containing pets invite the use of electronic containment systems. There are pluses and minuses to these systems.

Unless basic practices are followed, there can be serious consequences for the pet, the pet owner and the neighborhood. Proper training focused on the use of these systems and how to gradually introduce the dog to the shock collar is required to avoid negative results.

Location, set up and maintenance of the system is crucial. Check batteries regularly and be aware that power outages can cause these systems to malfunction. The border of the barrier should be back at least 15 feet from the street. Signage should be placed on the property indicating that an electronic fence is in use. Think about a child's ball rolling into your yard and the child not knowing that there was an electric fence containing a dog. A solid fence would keep a child from entering your yard easily, whereas an electronic fence does not.

Some dogs should never be contained behind an electronic fence. This would include dogs that will run through the fence no matter what, known aggressive dogs that would pose a

public threat if they did break the fence line and small dogs that could easily be targeted by larger predators that wouldn't be deterred by an electronic fence.

Electronic fences require supervision by the owner. Owners who leave their pets unattended are unaware of negative behaviors that may develop. It is not unusual for the dog to exhibit barrier frustration, charging at passersby and habitual barking. Sudden storms can cause panic, and extended exposure to extremely hot weather is not tolerated well by most breeds.

Electronic systems do not keep native animals or intruders out and may leave dogs vulnerable. Unsupervised dogs can be the targets of vandals, dog nappers and thieves.

NOTES

1. Kids 4 Critters, a program that teaches responsible pet ownership to 4th graders, in conjunction with the Wendell Elementary School, produced a great video for children on the importance of picking up poop (PUP). The video can be seen at this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yso8ULJODrs>.
2. A great article on the various types of barking and how you can work with your dog to address their needs can be found at: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/common-dog-behavior-issues/barking>
3. This is a great article on Dog Walking Etiquette:
<http://www.animalbehaviorcollege.com/blog/dog-walking-etiquette/>
4. There are a variety of harnesses and collars for walking dogs. You can work with a professional to determine which combination works best for your dog. The best choice is always the one that is comfortable for your dog and ensures that your dog cannot break from the harness or collar.

This is a great article on various types of collars and harnesses: <https://drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/which-types-of-collars-and-harnesses-are-safe-for-your-dog/>

5. There are pros and cons to electronic fences that are outlined here: <https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/the-pros-and-cons-of-invisible-fences-for-dogs>

CREDITS

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