

Briefing from Graham Smith 14th April 2010 (*updated 13th September 2012)

Dogs on walks

Prompted by one or two recent incidents involving dogs on LVR walks, your committee has reviewed our policy. We have decided to make no change; simply to re-emphasise a couple of points to you as walk leaders.

In contrast to some Rambler Groups who ban dogs completely from their walks, we support the central Rambler policy of permitting our walkers to bring well behaved dogs if they wish. But I must stress that within that umbrella, the final decision rests with each individual leader: if you do not wish to have dogs on your walk, please say so on your walk proposal & that information will be published. *However, under the Disability Equality Act (2010), stating simply "No dogs, please" is a breach of the Act as assistance dogs, including hearing, guide, service, therapy & seizure alert dogs, must be allowed to walk with owners. Thus in future our programme, website & Walksfinder entries will state "*Registered Assistance Dogs only, please*".

A fundamental & obvious point, which is absolutely non-discretionary, is that dogs **must** be on a lead & under close control when walking through any field or property containing or adjacent to livestock. The leader should, in a pleasant way, make this clear to any dog owner before the start & get agreement, if the dog is to join the walk. Indeed, for the comfort of everyone on the walk, you may wish to advise the dog owner that you might ask them to put the dog on a lead in other circumstances e.g. on a narrow canal towpath where a dog pushing past legs can be disconcerting, or where the dog could access a private garden. The decision is entirely that of the leader.

If any individual or group of Ramblers should attract aggressive attention from cattle, particularly with calves, the situation may be exacerbated by a dog whom they may regard as a threat. In such circumstances, if cattle are threatening at close quarters & there is reason to fear injury to anyone it may be best temporarily to release the dog while the owner escapes. The dog is likely to be agile enough to make its own escape & rejoin the group, where it can again be secured.

It's impossible to cover every eventuality in a note such as this. We want to be fair both to our members owning dogs & those who don't, while also preserving the good reputation of Ramblers.

Finally, please note that this leaders' brief will be put on the Leaders' section of the LVR website, & there is now a new section on the Left Hand navigation for Leaders. You will require the previously advised username & password (*leader* and *walk4health*) to access it.

Best regards,

Graham