

## Dog Walking and Footpaths ~ a brief overview

Want to take your dog for a walk? Need to check where you can go? Don't know where the local footpaths are? Or how the Countryside Code applies to dogs? This is the article for you. Links are provided to show the origin of the information, and guidance to further information.

The Right to Roam only applies to certain areas such as mountains and moorlands, common land and coastal paths (see <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land> for full details), not to farm land.

See official map website for footpaths (<https://footpathmaps.com/> and sample below). If it is not on their list, then it is not an official footpath, and is not open to walkers (or dogs).



And the Countryside Code as it applies to walking your dog:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>

### **Keep dogs under effective control**

When you take your dog into the outdoors, always ensure it does not disturb wildlife, farm animals, horses or other people by keeping it under effective control. This means that you:

- keep your dog on a lead, or
- keep it in sight at all times, be aware of what it's doing and be confident it will return to you promptly on command
- ensure it does not stray off the path or area where you have a right of access

Special dog rules may apply in particular situations, so always look out for local signs – for example:

- dogs may be banned from certain areas that people use, or there may be restrictions, byelaws or control orders limiting where they can go
- the access rights that normally apply to open country and registered common land (known as 'open access' land) require dogs to be kept on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July, to help protect ground nesting birds, and all year round near farm animals
- at the coast, there may also be some local restrictions to require dogs to be kept on a short lead during the bird breeding season, and to prevent disturbance to flocks of resting and feeding birds during other times of year

It's always good practice (and a legal requirement on 'open access' land) to keep your dog on a lead around farm animals and horses, for your own safety and for the welfare of the animals. A farmer may shoot a dog which is attacking or chasing farm animals without being liable to compensate the dog's owner.

However, if cattle or horses chase you and your dog, it is safer to let your dog off the lead – don't risk getting hurt by trying to protect it. Your dog will be much safer if you let it run away from a farm animal in these circumstances and so will you.

Everyone knows how unpleasant dog mess is and it can cause infections, so always clean up after your dog and get rid of the mess responsibly – 'bag it and bin it'. Make sure your dog is wormed regularly to protect it, other animals and people.

The maps and the signposting are the responsibility of the local County Council. These signs are generally metal posts and signs. There should always be posts on the road marking the junction of road and pathway.

Footpaths are 1.5m minimum width. A bridle path is 2.5m minimum width. Corpse paths, for example, are often bridle paths (the path they used to bring bodies to the graveyard [https://www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org/dbimsgs/Church\\_Alvescot%20guide.pdf](https://www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org/dbimsgs/Church_Alvescot%20guide.pdf) Alvescot Church Guide pg2).