



Enjoying the Outdoors Responsibly with Your Pet

It happens every day—millions of Americans venture outdoors to take advantage of our nation’s vast system of public lands. Whether it’s a day hike, a picnic, an overnight camping trip or just a chance to walk the dog, Americans spend countless hours each year enjoying the out-of-doors.

We are fortunate to find many diverse outdoor recreation areas close to home, many of which are open to pets. When and where allowed, spending time outdoors with pets can be fun for our four-legged friends and us. However, spending time outdoors with pets responsibly requires specific Leave No Trace skills and ethics.

Know Before You Go – Planning ahead is the easiest way to protect outdoor places and to enjoy a safe visit with your pet. Knowing site-specific regulations beforehand will help you protect the areas you enjoy. Government offices or Internet sites can provide you with pre-trip information. Use a map, bring a small first aid kit and remember to bring additional clothing to keep you warm and dry. Wear good shoes or boots to walk through puddles or choose trails that are not muddy. Always have a leash for your pet. Carry plastic bags that you can use to pick up your pet’s waste. The more you know and the more prepared you are, the easier it will be to protect the places you enjoy visiting.

Pick Up Poop – Pet waste can be a serious problem in the outdoors. With so many people recreating with their pets, the potential to impact the environment is significant. Pet waste smells, can be a health hazard for people (particularly children) and other animals, and is not natural to any environment. Cleaning up after your pet helps protect water resources, plant life and habitat for native animals. The solution is simple—clean up after your pet. Many areas supply bags that you can use to pick up your pet’s waste. If these are not available, a plastic grocery or newspaper bag will work. Bag your pet’s waste and put it in the trash. This simple act keeps lands used for recreation clean for all to enjoy.

Manage Your Dog – Keeping your dog in control protects your pet, other visitors and their pets, and local wildlife. Be sure to check with local government officials or land managers about area leash requirements. If leashes are required, use them.

Respect private property by not allowing your dog to wander from designated trails or off-leash areas. Always manage your dog, for his sake and yours.

Be Considerate of Others – Remember, we all enjoy the outdoors in different ways. Pay attention, expect to encounter others and be courteous. Yield to all. Others may not appreciate your dog's company; always ask before allowing your dog to approach them. Excessive barking is never in style. Let nature's sounds prevail.

A Final Challenge

Leave No Trace combines knowledge and judgment with ethical responsibility. In its simplest form, Leave No Trace is about making good decisions to protect the world around you—the world we all enjoy. Do your part to pass our nation's heritage of outdoor recreation to future generations. To learn more about Leave No Trace or to become a member, please visit www.LNT.org or call 1.800.332.4100