

Dogs at Large / Leash Law



West Linn Municipal Code 5.250: *Running at large definition:* Off or outside the premises belonging to the person having the control, custody or possession of the dog while the dog is not under the complete control of such person by means of an adequate leash, or is within a vehicle of such person.

West Linn Municipal Code 5.260 (1) It shall be a violation for a keeper of any dog to permit any such dog to run at large, as defined in section 5.250, upon any public street, highway or public place, or upon private property owned by a person or persons other than the keeper of the dog within the corporate limits of the city.

Off Leash areas: The only area in the City of West Linn where it is legal for a dog to be off leash is the “Off Leash” field near the main parking lot of Mary S. Young Park. The off leash area is clearly marked with signs and is the only place in the park where dogs may be allowed off leash. All dogs must be leashed on all beach areas, trails and sport fields.

Mary S. Young Park State Park is located on Highway 43 (Willamette Drive) between Mark Lane and Mapleton Drive.

Dangerous Dogs at Large: If a dog has been classified as a Dangerous Dog under the West Linn Municipal Code it is considered to be at large any time it is outside of a completely enclosed or fenced area while not attached to a solid object or person capable of controlling it with a sturdy leash. Permitting a dog, which has been classified as dangerous to run at large will result in a citation.

Suitable Leashes and Restraints:

A suitable leash means nylon, rope, chain or leather strap hooked to the dog's collar on one end by a sturdy and secure clip, and firmly attached to the owner on the other end.

“Flexi” or “Retractable” Leash Warning: This style of leash should never be used on a dog which has aggressive tendencies or one which tends to pull or be difficult to control.

When a dog is out at the end of a retractable leash, it is very difficult to regain control if things go wrong. It is very easy for a dog to pull away from its handler or the handler may not be able to pull their dog off of another dog or a

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person from up to 15 feet away. You should never allow your dog to be more than six feet away from you.

Penalties and Fines:

You may be cited to appear in court and fined up to \$500.00 per violation. The judge may also order your dog to be removed from the City of West Linn, restitution for damages or any other remedy within the power of the court.

Your dog may also be impounded which will incur impound fees, boarding fees, and vaccination fees while at Clackamas County Dog Control.

FAQs:

Q: If I am walking with my dog and it stays at my side (heels) is the dog still considered to be at large?

A: YES! If your dog is off of your property it must be on a leash even if it is an obedience champion.

Q: Is it okay to let my dog off its leash to play fetch in the park?

A: No...the only place in any of West Linn's City Parks where your dog may be off its leash is the "Off Leash" area in Mary S. Young Park.

Q: My dog was bitten when it approached a leashed dog to say hi. Who is responsible?

A: You are! No matter how friendly your dog is it is required to be on a leash...had your dog been leashed the incident wouldn't have occurred. Remember that leashes are for your dog's safety. Not only could you be cited for allowing your dog to be at large, you may also be held liable for any and all vet or medical costs incurred if the leashed dog or its owner was injured in the scuffle.

Q: My neighbor frequently allows their nine year old son to walk their 150 pound Mastiff and it charges at people, chases cats and drags the child through our landscaping...Is this okay?

A: NO! Remember the West Linn Municipal Code states the dog must be under complete control. That means if the person attached to the leash isn't large enough, or doesn't have the strength to control the animal, the dog is at large!

Q: Why am I receiving the citation for the dog running at large when it belongs to my son/daughter?

A: Because until your son or daughter is eighteen, you are ultimately responsible for their actions and have control over their property, which in the state of Oregon includes dogs.

Q: My dog was recently hit by a car and requires expensive veterinarian care...doesn't the driver of the car have to pay the vet bills?

A: NO! Not only is the driver of the vehicle not responsible for your pet's vet bills, you may be held liable for any damages to the person's vehicle or any other property damage caused by the driver's attempt to avoid your dog. And if your dog causes an accident while running on the road YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE!

Thoughts from the Animal Control Officer:

Whether dog owners feel their furry four-footed friend is friendly, harmless, an obedience champion, or just too old, ALL dogs are required to be attached to a responsible person capable of controlling that dog with a suitable leash.

The police department receives almost daily complaints of dogs being walked off of leashes on sidewalks (even a dog at perfect heel position is at large if it is not on a leash!) on public streets, in parks or on school tracks/fields. Of course, that's not mentioning the dogs that are simply let out to run the neighborhoods.

For those of you who frequent the trails Wilderness Park and soccer fields in Mary S. Young Park and open spaces around the city be warned! Any dog owners who are not appropriately attached to their pets may be cited for permitting their dogs to run at large.

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Remember part of responsible pet ownership is being always aware of your pet's impact on other people's lives. Not everybody likes dogs. Some people are afraid of them and can become highly stressed when approached by a strange dog. Just because your dog is friendly, doesn't mean the other dog it approaches will be. Dogs also may feel they need to protect their owners from your dogs' advances.

Be respectful of your neighbors, a little consideration for others will go a long way. The negative situations created by the few dog owners who do not obey the rules affect all dog owners when laws, regulations and policies for dogs in public places are made!

Source URL (retrieved on 2012-05-10 09:14): <http://westlinnoregon.gov/police/dogs-large-leash-law>