



**Title:**  
**AGGRESSIVE DOG BAN POLICY**

<b>Subject:</b> <b>EMERGENCY &amp; SAFETY</b>	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 4	<b>Policy Number:</b> 01.00.00
<b>Category:</b> <b>DISTRICTWIDE POLICY</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> 05/26/2015	<b>Last Revised Date:</b> 06/13/2018

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Dog activities are intended to provide a fun and rewarding experience for a dog and its owner/handler. However, despite careful and proper preparation, instruction, medical advice, conditioning and equipment, there is still a risk of serious injury to the dog, its owner/handler or other persons or animals. Dogs are pack animals and when "Off-Leash", even the best-trained dogs may act instinctively. Understandably, not all hazards and dangers associated with dog activities can be foreseen. Certain inherent risks include the propensity of any dog to behave in dangerous ways that may result in injury to persons or other dogs.

Additional risk factors include, but are not limited to, the inexperience, negligence or irresponsibility of a dog owner/handler; the inability to predict a dog's reaction to sound, movements, objects, persons, or other animals; and actions by the dog due to fright, anger, stress, insect bites, or natural reactions such as jumping, pulling, resisting and biting. Other risk factors include the hazards associated with environmental and traffic conditions, inclement weather, slip and falls, condition of the premises, equipment failure, failure in instruction/supervision, and all other circumstances inherent to dog and/or outdoor activities.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (*the "District"*) has adopted a "Three-Strikes" aggressive dog policy, which effectively bans any dog and/or its owner either permanently or for a period exceeding twelve (12) months from all Off-Leash Dog Areas after three (3) documented incidents of aggressive behavior as described in the definition of aggressive dog below. The policy also establishes that dog owners are held responsible if their dog bites, attacks, or injures any person and/or other animal. Notwithstanding the above, the District reserves the right to address each incident of aggressive behavior on the complexity and severity of the incident and may exercise its authority to impose a permanent or lengthy ban for any dog and/or its owner regardless of the number of strikes. Such situations may include aggressive dogs that bite or injure another animal or a human being.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is: **(1)** to establish the District's "Three-Strikes" aggressive dog ban policy; **(2)** to inform dog owners/handlers of their responsibilities and District's rules and regulations; and **(3)** to describe the procedure of reporting any potential and/or witnessed aggressive dog attack.

**AFFECTED AREAS:**

This policy applies to all District visitors, permit holders, and employees.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Aggressive dog:** An aggressive dog is one that, on District premises or at District activities, makes or repeatedly attempts to make negative physical contact with any person or any animal. "Negative Physical Contact" is contact that is potentially harmful or dangerous to persons or pets. Some examples might be, but are not limited to, the following: snapping, growling, charging or lunging, raising hackles, and biting.

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Any person who believes they have experienced or witnessed an act of dog aggression may fill out a written incident report.

**Leash:** Leash means a cord, rope, strap, or chain which shall be securely fastened to the collar or harness of a dog and shall be of sufficient strength to keep such dog or other animal under control.

**PROCEDURE/PROCESS:**

**1) General Rules and Regulations:**

- a. Off-Leash Dog Area Hours: Sunrise until Sunset
- b. Use restricted to permit holders only:
  - Each dog must have an individual permit and only three (3) dogs per person are allowed.
  - Annual permits are valid for the calendar year only, and are not prorated.
  - Fees are determined by the current District fee schedule.
  - Dog collars must be worn at all times.
  - All dogs must have rabies tags attached to their collars.
  - All dog owners/handlers must carry their permits around their neck while in the Off-Leash Dog Area. Permits must be visible to everyone.
- c. Dog owners/handlers may be ticketed for a violation of the District general use ordinance if they are in a District Off-Leash Dog Area without the proper permit.
- d. Owners/handlers are legally responsible for the behavior/action of their dogs. The dog owner/handler agrees to assume the full risk of any injuries, damages or loss connected with the use of the Off-Leash Dog Area.
  - Aggressive dogs are not allowed.
  - Female dogs in heat are not permitted in the Off-Leash Dog Area.
  - Dogs must not enter the transitional area when occupied by other dogs.
  - Owners/handlers must carry a leash at all times; leash their dogs at the first sign of aggression and leave the Off-Leash Dog Area immediately.
  - Leashed dogs are not allowed. They may create a problem.
  - Muzzled dogs are not allowed.
  - Owners/handlers must keep their dogs in view and under control at all times.
  - Children must be closely supervised.
  - Gate must be locked at all times.
  - Please leave food including dog treats at home or in your car.
  - Dogs must be at least 4 months or older to enter the Off-Leash Dog Areas.
  - Scoop the poop! Help us keep the Off-Leash Dog Areas clean and pick up after your dogs.
- e. People who do not follow the rules will be fined and/or have their permits revoked.
- f. All posted rules and use restrictions that otherwise apply to the larger grove or woods in which the Off-Leash Dog Areas are located also apply within designated Off-Leash Dog Areas.
- g. Other District ordinances, state statues and administrative orders apply to the use of these Off-Leash Dog Areas.

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- h. All permit holders are responsible for the Off-Leash Dog Areas and must partially self-police these areas.
- i. Local dog group monitors (*volunteers*) are permitted to check permits. If a violation is discovered, monitors are to immediately inform District police.

2) **“Three-Strikes” Aggressive Ban Policy:**

The District has adopted a “*Three-Strikes*” aggressive animal ban policy. This means that, in general, after three (3) documented aggressive incidents, the District may ban said dog and/or its owner from all Off-Leash Dog Areas permanently. Dog owners will not be reimbursed if they or their dog have been banned from all Off-Leash Dog Areas.

**Strike One Penalty:** If the Forest Preserves determines a dog has committed its first act of aggressive behavior, said dog and/or its owner will be banned from all Off-Leash Dog Areas for a period not to exceed six (6) months.

**Strike Two Penalty:** If the Forest Preserves determines a dog has committed its second act of aggressive behavior, said dog and/or its owner will be banned from all Off-Leash Dog Areas for a period not to exceed twelve (12) months.

**Strike Three Penalty:** If the District determines a dog has committed its third act of aggressive behavior, said dog and/or its owner may be permanently banned or banned for a period exceeding twelve (12) months from all District Off-Leash Dog Areas, provided, however, any ban longer than five (5) years may go before Cook County’s Department of Administrative Hearings for an appropriate recommendation

- Notwithstanding the above, the District reserves the right to address each incident of aggressive behavior on the complexity and severity of the incident and may exercise its authority to permanently ban, or ban for a period exceeding twelve (12) months, any aggressive dog and/or its owner from all District Off-Leash Dog Areas, regardless of the number of strikes.

3) **Reporting Dog Biting/Attacks:**

- a. All individuals that witness aggressive dog behavior should inform District Law Enforcement Department (911).
- b. Individuals that witness any animal attack, and/or strange or aggressive behavior, are requested to provide documentation for example: pictures, witness statements and/or contact information, etc.
- c. After an incident has been reported, District police officers will: (a) Respond to the dog park and/or conduct a prompt investigation which shall include: (1) Interview all witnesses; (2) Interview dog owners/handlers involved and/or injured by another dog (or other animal); (3) Photograph and/or document any injuries to any dog, person, or other animal; (4) Examine and record all permit and/or license information for all involved dogs or other animals; (b) Prepare an offense/incident report to record a summary of all interviews, injuries, permit/license numbers, and any enforcement action taken (including court date and location); and, (c) Forward a copy of the completed offense/incident report to PRC and Legal Departments.

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**Special Note:** Dog fights are rare in dog parks, but if one does occur, the best method to break it up is to grab both dogs' hind legs and direct them in opposite directions. Block any eye contact the dogs can make with each other. Dogs that remain unruly towards another dog must be removed immediately.

**TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:**

- 1) All relevant/necessary District staff should be trained on this policy.

**COMMUNICATION PLAN:**

- 2) This policy should be distributed to all Off-Leash dog permit holders.
- 3) This policy should be distributed to all relevant/necessary staff.
- 4) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.

**REFERENCES:**

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Prohibited & Restricted Acts and Conditions ([FPDCC Code Section 3-2-1](#))

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Fee Schedule ([FPDCC Code Section 7-1-1](#))

**POLICY LEAD:** Karen Vaughan  
Director of Permits, Rentals & Concessions

**APPROVAL:** Arnold Randall  
General Superintendent

**POLICY HISTORY:**

**Written:** 05/26/2015  
**Revised:** 04/15/2016                      **Revised:** 06/13/2018

**If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:**

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
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