

Community Impact Statement - Dog Fouling

Background

- Dog owners have a legal duty to clean up each time their dog fouls in a public space.¹
- There are approximately 9 million pet dogs in the UK, with 26% of households owning a dog (2018 figures).²
- The Dogs Trust estimates that 69,621 stray dogs were handled by local authorities across the UK during 2018-19 (with a figure of 5,143 for Wales).³
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities and other landowners to keep land for which they are responsible, clear of litter and refuse (dog fouling is treated as refuse).⁴

Scale and cost of the problem

- Street cleanliness surveys undertaken by Keep Wales Tidy showed that dog fouling was present on an average of 8.8% of streets across Wales in 2018-19.⁵
- In 2016, a survey of 2000 UK dog owners found that 72% of UK residents see dog fouling in their local community once a week, with 24% seeing the issue at least one a day.⁶
- Dog fouling is a huge problem in some areas. As part of a 2014 campaign, volunteers removed 13kg of dog fouling from two beaches in Dorset and found nearly 70 incidents a week in a small area near a car park by the beach.⁷
- The issue also tends to be worse during winter months when it is darker and owners feel they can leave the dog fouling without being seen - figures collected by Denbighshire County Council show the highest number of incidents during December, January and February (with the lowest figures seen over the summer months).⁸

¹ Environment Law. (2017). *Dog fouling*. Available: <http://www.environmentlaw.org.uk/rte.asp?id=50>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

² PFMA. (n.d.). *Pet Population 2018*. Available: <https://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population-2018>. Last accessed 20.10.20.

³ Ipsos. (n.d.). *Stray Dogs Survey Report 2018-19*. Available: <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/about-us/publications/stray%20dogs%20report%202018-19.pdf>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2007). *Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse and Associated Guidance 2007*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

⁵ Moss, C and Jones, H. (2019). *HOW CLEAN ARE OUR STREETS? All Wales Local Environmental Audit and Management System Report 2018-19*. Available: <https://kwt.eu.rit.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=25600629-fd94-4f62-9d8c-f6579a0da8e0>. Last accessed 13-10-20.

⁶ Keep Britain Tidy. (2017). *The Big Scoop Report*. Available: <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/news-events/issues-campaigns/dog-fouling/the%20big%20scoop%20report%20-%20december%202017.pdf>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

⁷ BBC. (2014). *West Dorset beach clean removes 13kg of dog mess*. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-26900361>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

⁸ Clarke, S. (2019). *Dog-fouling in Denbighshire more likely during winter, figures show*. Available:

<https://www.rhyljournal.co.uk/news/17454695.dog-fouling-denbighshire-likely-winter-figures-show/>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

- According to a 2014 study on dog waste, *'The Waste Improvement Network (WIN, 2011) estimated that individual authorities spend up to £100,000 per year on dog waste collection and disposal with further expenditure related to provision of dedicated dog waste bins, street cleansing, enforcement activities, signage and public communications with an estimated total cost to local authorities in England and Wales of £22 million per year (Atenstaedt and Jones, 2011).'*⁹

Impacts on public health

- There are serious health risks associated with dog fouling.

Toxocariasis

This is an infection (caused by roundworm parasites that are commonly found in dogs) which can cause the following symptoms:

Mild symptoms

- Cough
- High temperature
- Headache
- Stomach pain

(Rare) severe symptoms - where the roundworm larvae infect organs like the liver, lungs, eyes and brain

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Skin rashes
- Wheezing or breathing difficulties
- Seizures
- Blurred or cloudy vision
- A very red and painful eye

If one of the eyes are affected, there is a risk of permanent loss of vision.

People of all ages can catch the infection, but it usually affects young children who handle soil or sand contaminated with the dog fouling. The infection can also be caused by unwashed vegetables which have been in contact with the contaminated soil. The eggs produced by the worms can survive in soil or sand for many months.

⁹ Lowe, C. N. *et al.* (2014). Environmental and social impacts of domestic dog waste in the UK: investigating barriers to behavioural change in dog walkers. *International Journal of Environment and Waste Management*. 13 (4), p331-347.

In 2019, it was reported that 19 people had been hospitalized across north Wales due to Toxocariasis since 2015.

Sources:

- NHS. (2018). *Overview Toxocariasis*. Available: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/toxocariasis/>. Last accessed 21.10.20.
- BARC Project. (n.d.). *The science behind BARC*. Available: <https://barcproject.wixsite.com/barcproject/barc-science->. Last accessed 21.10.20.
- North Wales Daily Post. (2019). *This health board revelation shows why you really should clean up after your dog*. Available: <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/health-board-revelation-shows-you-16070372>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

- Collin Smith from Miskin had to have his leg amputated because dog fouling on a rugby pitch got into a wound which caused a serious infection.¹⁰
- People can also get Hydatid Disease from dog fouling, where eggs from tapeworms are carried by the blood to various parts of the body and develop into cysts (which can occur in the lungs, liver, brain or bone) - the only treatment is surgical removal.¹¹ Children are at particular at risk of the disease, which can be fatal.¹²

Impacts on the local community

- Dog fouling is a great concern to the public. 74% of people in Wales don't think there are any acceptable reasons not to clean up after a dog.¹³
- Dog fouling is one of the biggest complaints to councils.¹⁴ People complain more to their MPs about dog fouling than any other issue and it is a public priority for council spending.¹⁵
- People in Wales consider dog fouling to be the problem which has the greatest impact on the look and feel of an area and 55% of people regularly see dog fouling in their local communities.¹⁶ In 2016, a survey of 2000 UK dog owners found that '*...47% of adults think dog fouling is one of*

¹⁰ Heaney, P. (2018). *Rhondda Cynon Taf council issues £22k of dog poo fines*. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-45145181>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

¹¹ Welsh Assembly Government. (2009). *Hydatid Disease - Question and Answer Sheet*. Available:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-12/hydatid-disease-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

¹² Welsh Government. (2018). *Hydatid Disease Poster*. Available: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-12/hydatid-disease-poster.pdf>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

¹³ Keep Wales Tidy. (2016). *Dog fouling A review of the range of interventions used to tackle the issue of dog fouling an promote positive behaviour change*. Available: <https://www.keepwalestidy.cymru/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8e88b9f0-cd98-4162-8dd0-b5cf995c7d2d>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

¹⁴ Walker, D. (2013). *Eight radical solutions to the problem of dog mess*. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22853270>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

¹⁵ Henley, J. (2009). *Dog poo Britain*. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2009/feb/11/dog-fouling-britain>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

¹⁶ Beaufort Research (2010). *Litter in Wales: Understanding Littering and Litterers*. (Unpublished).

*the most annoying things they experience in public places, and they find instances of dog fouling more annoying than litter, pollution, traffic and smoking’.*¹⁷

- Issues like dog fouling ‘...can have a serious and long-lasting impact on wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and communities...’ and ‘...have a major impact on citizens’ feeling of connection to their local area, on their sense of community cohesion, and on their ability to help shape positive change in their neighbourhood.’¹⁸
- Dog fouling can be taken into homes, schools, workplaces and businesses on an individual’s shoes.
- The issue is a hazard to council and other maintenance staff when cutting grass, as it can spray into their faces and onto their clothes.
- Dog fouling on sports pitches is responsible for stopping games on a weekly basis in Wales.¹⁹

Wider impacts

- Dog fouling doesn’t only pose a health hazard to people, but to other dogs. They can become infected by roundworm parasites by sniffing or licking infected faeces.²⁰ Infected puppies may be underweight, have a pot belly or thin hair coat.²¹ Heavy infestations can lead to anaemia and dogs of any age with severe worms can have vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation.²²
- The issue can also be a danger to farm animals, and can impact financially on the agriculture community:
 - Eggs from tapeworms which are passed in dog fouling can be picked up by grazing cattle and sheep which can lead to Hydatid Disease.²³ Signs of the disease in infected livestock include reduced growth, a reduction in milk produced and a lower birth rate.²⁴
 - Neosporosis leads to abortion in cattle, which become infected through dog fouling - it is the most frequently diagnosed cause for abortion in cattle in the UK.²⁵ The disease can also lead to reduced milk yields.²⁶

¹⁷ Keep Britain Tidy. (2017). *Op cit.*

¹⁸ White, D (2012). *Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities Local Environmental Problems and Wellbeing*. Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust.

¹⁹ Discombe, M. (2018). *Sports clubs in Cardiff have their say on plans to ban dogs from sports pitches*. Available: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/sports-clubs-cardiff-say-plans-15267674>. Last accessed 21.10.20.

²⁰ Ward, E. and Panning, A. (n.d.). *Roundworm Infection in Dogs*. Available: <https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/roundworm-infection-in-dogs>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

²¹ The Healthy Pet Club. (2020). *Toxocara Canis*. Available: <https://www.thehealthypetclub.co.uk/toxocara-canis/>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Welsh Assembly Government. (2009). *Op cit.*

²⁴ Welsh Government. (2018). *Hydatid Disease*. Available: <https://gov.wales/hydatid-disease-guide>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

²⁵ BBC. (2014). *Op cit.*

²⁶ North Wales Sheepdog Society. (2018). *Neosporosis & Sarcocystosis information*. Available: <https://www.northwalessheepdogsociety.org.uk/2018/04/02/neosporosis-sarcocystosis-information/>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

- Sarcocystosis which is also contracted through dog fouling, can cause neurological disease and death in sheep, and its presence can not only be passed to lambs during pregnancy but it can also result in the meat being condemned after slaughter.²⁷
In terms of Neosporosis and Sarcocystosis, dog fouling from infected dogs can contaminate not only pasture, but also animal feed, water and bedding.²⁸
- Dog fouling can pollute water courses and bathing water - *'Just one gram of dog poo diluted in one million litres of sea water (that's enough to fill six double decker buses or two and half standard swimming pools) could pose a health risk to bathers. Less than half a teaspoon of dog mess contains enough bacteria to potentially affect the classification of a bathing water'*.²⁹
Bacterial levels have been so high at some beaches, that visitors have had to stay out of the water.³⁰

Jones, H. Keep Wales Tidy, October 2020.

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²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hards, S. (2018). *How dog poo in the sea and on the beach is putting your health at risk*. Available: <https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/how-dog-poo-sea-beach-2149102?cmpredirect=>. Last accessed 22.10.20.

³⁰ Watson, T. (2002). *Dog waste poses threat to water*. Available: <https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/science/2002-06-07-dog-usat.htm>. Last accessed 22.10.20.