

Estabrook Woods Dog Leash Requirement

The leash requirement in most of Estabrook Woods exists to keep all of us safe, including wildlife, livestock, and dogs. It helps ensure that places are safe and welcoming to everyone, including the elderly, children, and the disabled. And it protects the core mission of Estabrook Woods as a nature preserve for study and research.

Protecting Wildlife



The core purpose of Estabrook Woods was established in 1966 when it was established as a wildlife and nature preserve. This mission requires that core natural areas be undisturbed and off limits to dogs and people. Visitors need to stay on the trails, and dogs also need to stay on the trails, which requires that they be leashed.

The scent that dogs leave behind when they urinate and defecate signals to native wildlife that there is a predator in the area. The scent can linger for several days and may cause animals to abandon the area. It is important to note that virtually no nature preserves allow dogs to go off leash, and most do not allow dogs at all.

Many people who bring a dog into the woods don't know how their dog will behave when encountering new kinds of wildlife, and are surprised when their dog takes off after wildlife or follows a scent into the woods. In the past, some people have been found to bring their dogs to Estabrook SPECIFICALLY to let them chase wildlife.

Dog waste is required to be picked up and carried out in Estabrook Woods. Pick up does not happen enough, with over a ton of dog waste left each year, and the problem is worse when dogs run loose; controlling this problem is another reason why leashes are required.

Protecting Livestock



Estabrook Woods is surrounded by horse farms and other livestock raising activities. Many dogs have never met a horse. In such cases the dogs frequently behave in new and unexpected ways. In a recent case reported in the Concord Journal, an experienced rider on a horse was attacked by loose dogs in Estabrook Woods and thrown from her horse; the dog owner was not able to stop the dogs; the dog owner then collected the dogs and left the scene without regard for the rider. In a number of cases, loose dogs have entered livestock areas around Estabrook and harassed livestock and killed chickens. For some Estabrook property owners, horse riding is a key use on their lands; the continued permission for public access across their trails depends on public behavior that does not threaten their horses and livestock.



Protecting People and Dogs

Many people don't want to interact with loose dogs or are afraid of them. People who are walking don't know your dog and have no idea whether to fear him. The leash requirement in Estabrook Woods allows those people feel it is safe to go there. Even if you know your dog is friendly, other people have no idea what to expect. If your dog is unleashed, your dog might suddenly approach them.

The fact is that many people have had bad experiences with dogs *right after their owners have called out that they are friendly*. It may be that your muddy dog jumped on their clothing; it may be that your dog caused them to lose their balance; and in some cases people are nipped at or even bitten. And once people have an experience like that, they naturally are afraid of any dog not restrained by a leash.

Some people have special reasons why they have a heightened fear of a dog interaction. They might be senior citizens or children. They might have been bitten in the past, or perhaps their dog was bitten. They might have a dog, who is on a leash, and they are afraid they can't control the interaction with a loose dog. There are many people who run in the woods, and dogs often take a special interest in runners and chase them. These people are reassured when they see that an approaching dog is on a leash, confirming that the owner can actually control the dog.

Your idea of a well-trained, friendly dog may be totally different than someone who has a fear of dogs, is a child, or is afraid of falling.

There are many people who have expressed that they will not walk in Estabrook Woods unless the dogs are leashed.

In summary, protecting wildlife, livestock, and people are key reasons why dogs are required to be on leash in Estabrook Woods. Most nature preserves specifically do not allow dogs, local examples being Great Meadows and Audubon Properties. While Estabrook Woods has allowed dogs, this is primarily by permission of the owners and ongoing permission for bringing dogs depends on visitors following the rules and leashing their dogs.

Please be responsible, respectful, safe, and follow the posted rules.