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Walk your dog, conscientiously

Corona concerns worldwide have disrupted pretty much everything, in what many have started to call "the new normal." But here's a little bit of good news: off-leash parks are open.

The organization that oversees our four local dog parks--Dakota, Ike, Kane, and Lucky--couldn't actually close them even if we wanted to. That's for the purpose of exercising our dogs (and our own bodies), and DOGPAW doesn't have government powers to restrict use of the parks.

So put the leash on your dog and come on over to the park. But don't forget the new rules of the new normal:

--Maintain social distance. The coronavirus jumps easily and quickly between humans, so avoid shaking hands and stay a couple of arms' length from other park walkers. The dogs probably won't honor the social-distance rule, but their owners must.

--Keep clean. Both before and after visiting the park, practice good hygiene and wash your hands. Avoid touching your face. Use a sanitizer on benches, and other surfaces.

--Don't come if you're feeling sick. If you've got a fever, a dry cough, difficulty breathing, or a feeling of fatigue, ignore everything we just said but the rest of us will appreciate it.

Of course, the new normal doesn't overrule the old rules. Basic good manners and other rules of park etiquette still apply:

--Pick up dog poop. Keep an eye on your dog, and when it leaves anything behind, pick it up. We provide poop bags and poop bins for this purpose. On your walk, pick that one up, too.

--Dispose of and pick up litter, too. We're seeing lots of water bottles, food wrappers, and grocery bags drifting around the parks these days. Take them home and put them in your recycle bin. If you bring grocery, produce, or newspaper bags to the park to give them a second life as a poop bag, please do so. And feel free to pick up any other litter you see on your walk, just to help us all keep the place clean and pleasant.

--Leash your pet. Keep your four-legged companion on a leash until you get inside the dog gate. Dogs running loose in parking lots and street corners and the public entities--the city, the county, and Bonneville Power Authority--that are generous enough to lend us the use of these areas are landlords, so let's not tick them off.

It's a strange, anxious time, and your dog can't help but notice things are different, too. A little exercise and fresh air will do you both good--but please be safe.

We hope to see you at the dog park.

Public meeting off--for now

The off-leash dog parks may be operating more or less normally, but things are a little different for the humans associated with the parks. Our board has indefinitely postponed the public meeting it had planned to hold in April.

DOGPAW began holding public meetings last year as a way to address park users' concerns and hear their suggestions. The organization's board had planned to hold one in April, before coronavirus worries triggered government proclamations discouraging large-group gatherings and meetings.

“We appreciate our members’ and park users’ interest in these events, and we’re grateful they want to come,” said Eileen Cervantes, president. “Because so many public-meeting venues closed and the ongoing advice to avoid large gatherings of people, we decided it would be irresponsible to try

An anonymous donor helps pave the way

The gracious donation of six yards of gravel by a generous DOGPAW member (who wishes to remain anonymous), along with volunteer effort from students, helped improve the trails at Ike Dog Park recently.



Clark College students helped spread the donated gravel at Ike.

The donated 1/4-inch (minus) gravel went a long way toward providing drier and less slippery trails at the park, essentially paving stretches of trail that had turned into muddy, dangerous patches.

“We love to get donations like this, of stuff we can really use and put to work immediately,” said Eileen Cervantes, DOGPAW president. “We can’t always do what we like we did here, or let our members and park users know who’s helping out. It’s the donor’s choice, but either way, we really appreciate it.”

The gravel might have remained in a pile--irresistible to curious dogs--if the Penguins for Paws student group at Clark College hadn’t stepped up. The group showed up one sunny Sunday to carry wagon loads of stone to the slippery areas, and then to rake it all smooth.

DOGPAW OFF-LEASH DOG PARK LOCATIONS:

Dakota: 1515 N.E. 164th Ave. Vancouver, WA

Ike (Ross): 5167 N.E. 15th Ave. Vancouver, WA

Kane: 10910 N.E. 172nd Ave. Vancouver, WA
Lucky: 10100 N.E. 149th St. Brush Prairie, WA

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