

Don't leave others to step in it!

Most of us remembered to put the clocks back last weekend – but if you are a dog owner there is just one more thing to remember as the nights draw in, don't forget to 'bag and bin' your dog's mess when you are out and about in public places.

The vast majority of dog owners are responsible and pick up after their dog, but for those that don't they are breaking the law as dog faeces pose a public health risk. If an officer from South Northamptonshire Council witnesses a dog owner not picking up they may be liable to a fixed-penalty fine of £75. If the fine is not paid the owner could be fined up to £1,000 plus court costs.

We have also issued fixed penalties where a member of the public has witnessed a dog owner failing to pick up.

Some owners wrap the dog mess in a plastic bag, but then leave it at the side of the path. This is a littering offence and if the offender is found guilty in a Magistrates' Court the fine could increase to £2,500 plus costs and they will get a criminal record.

Cllr Andrew Grant, deputy leader and portfolio holder for environmental services, said: "Thoughtless dog owners are not only spoiling other people's enjoyment of our streets and countryside but also threatening public health and giving responsible dog owners a bad name. For this irresponsible minority the message is clear – they risk being prosecuted."

The best place for wrapped dog waste is in your own black household wheeled bin, but it can also be placed in any dog waste bin provided by your town or parish council. Failing that it can be placed in any street litter bin. Stepping in dog waste is not just unpleasant but it is also the perfect breeding ground for bacteria such as Campylobacter and Salmonella, and other forms of infection. The most damaging of these is caused by the roundworm Toxocara canis, which can pose a serious health risk to any individual unlucky enough to ingest infected soil.

For more information on dog fouling and how to report someone for failing to clean up after their dog visit www.southnorthants.gov.uk/dog-fouling or call 01327 322323.

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