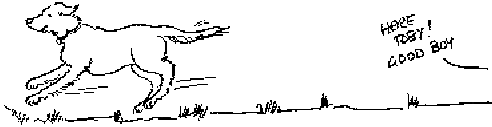


More on Dogs Paws for Thought

Belonging to the not-always popular company of dog walkers, and being, I hope, a responsible citizen, I offer my thoughts about our use of the local countryside.

Unfortunately, the earth is not 'a common treasury'. It all belongs to somebody, and much of it is used to grow food and fuel for us. I have to admit, when the conservation of wildlife became part of agriculture, I thought "How nice! We can walk round without disturbing the crops." The reason for these field margins became startlingly obvious to me, when visiting a remote farm undisturbed by walkers - skylarks! Dozens of them, in Oxfordshire, on arable land similar to ours. When did I last hear one in the fields here?

Since then I have kept to the footpaths and of course, our own community wood



where dogs can run free. There's a lovely enclosed community wood at Hailey too, which is 100% safe for dogs who maybe don't have a perfect recall response!

On another doggy matter: please make sure your dog has an ID tag on its collar, with your

postcode and phone number. Dogs do occasionally escape, and if we find them, how do we know where to take them home? The alternative to this is to contact the council dog warden. This results in the dog being taken to a pound at Princes Risborough (yes!), and it costs £60 to get it back.

A collar tag costs around £5. It is much cheaper, and avoids stress for the poor dog as it is carted away. It's actually against the law to be on the streets without an ID tag.

Heather Shute

An Extract from 'The Countryside Code'

By law, you must control your dog so that it does not disturb or scare farm animals or wildlife. On most areas of open country and common land, known as 'access land' you must keep your dog on a short lead between 1st March and 31st July, and all year round near farm animals. At certain times, dogs may not be allowed on some areas of access land or may need to be kept on a lead. Please follow any signs.

You do not have to put your dog on a lead on public paths, as long as it is under close control. But as a general rule, keep

your dog on a lead if you cannot rely on its obedience. By law, farmers are entitled to destroy a dog that injures or worries their animals. If a farm animal chases you and your dog, it is safer to let your dog off the lead, don't risk getting hurt by trying to protect it.

Take particular care that your dog doesn't scare sheep and lambs or wander where it might disturb birds that nest on the ground and other wildlife. Eggs and young will soon die without protection from their parents. More details on:

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk