

For immediate release: Oct. 17, 2012



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DOG LAWS ENFORCEMENT BLITZ FOCUSES ON PINEVIEW PARK

Missoula City-County Animal Control officers are focusing on enforcement of dog leash laws in the Pineview Park area this week following a rash of citizen complaints that included at least one bite report.

The most common complaints from citizens who use Missoula's parks, trails and playgrounds are dogs off-leash and people failing to pick up dog waste. City ordinance requires that dogs must be leashed on all city streets, trails and parks, and pet owners must pick up waste in public spaces immediately. Mutt Mitt dispensers are located in parks and at trailheads.

"We have been asked by the City to step up enforcement, especially in Pineview Park, to make sure people understand that it's not just courteous, responsible, safer behavior, it is required by City ordinance," said Animal Control Director Ed Franceschina. "Dogs off-leash will be cited."

Animal Control estimates Missoula's dog population at 25,000 to 35,000, about one dog for every two people. That number can have a large impact on parks and trails. City dog laws exist to help people and dogs get along in shared environments. Many park visitors do not enjoy contact with off-leash dogs, especially people using parks with small children, elderly people who fear being knocked over and people who are afraid of dogs. Dog waste can become a public health issue by spreading disease and polluting waterways.

Pineview Park, a 4.5-acre park in the middle Rattlesnake Valley, was a Missoula County park until 2007, when the Missoula City Council approved formation of a Special Improvement District to improve the park and to move it to City ownership. Since then, City dog laws have applied to the park.

Dogs may be off-leash in the dog parks at Fort Missoula and Jacob's Island Bark Park. They may be off-leash and under voice control on City-owned conservation lands.

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