

Trail Etiquette

“I’ll never ride my bike on the river trail again. I’d rather take my chances on the highway than deal with the dogs and owners in town.” The 65+ year old gentleman that made this comment had just been ‘clotheslined’ by a long leash on the river trail.

Unfortunately, he was just one of many sharing stories of negative dog incidents in town. With our growing dog population, it’s more important than ever to review dog and trail manners to maintain harmony in our community and acceptance of our best friends.

If you’re using the river trail, you’re using an improved trail (paved and maintained) which means you must be more on your game than on a dirt trail. No matter how friendly your dog is, when you’re in shared public areas, you have to tether your dog to you for their protection and security - plus it’s just polite.

Additionally, Durango city law states dogs must be on a 6’ or shorter leash. But let’s use common sense, a dog should never be on one side while the walker is on the other. If you cannot move the dog, move yourself and manage them so you are using one side of the walkway or the other, not both.

If your dog reacts badly to people or dogs, keep them on a shorter leash - and be sure to walk between your dog and the other dog or person. If they lunge or bite, use a Gentle Leader.

In the county, dogs can be off leash, if they are under voice control. Which means, that when you call them back to you, they come – no matter if there’s deer, a bear, another dog or a hotdog in front of them – you call, they come – that’s voice control. How does your dog do? Honestly. If it’s not 90% or better, practice - this is important!

If you walk with two or more dogs off-leash together, these dogs will have a lot more power, force and intimidation than a single dog. Dogs of the same household or dogs who often walk together, have power in numbers, so manage your walks with multiple pups to be sure they’re not intimidating others or coming on too strong.

Obviously, some of this is less etiquette than good ole’ common sense. For example, if you’ve ever left a poop bag on the side of the trail, pick one up on your way out. If you’re on a popular trail, you should always be able to see your dog and even if your dog is friendly, it’s your job not to let him or her be rude. It’s only together that we can be sure Durango stays a dog friendly town.

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