



LDWA

LONG DISTANCE

WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Dogs on Walks Policy

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Version	Author	Notes
V1.1	Stuart Bain	Policy Review
V1 (Jan 2022)	Stuart Bain	Approved by NEC
V2 (Jan 2023)	Stuart Bain	Approved by NEC 28/01/2023
V3 (Feb 2026)	Sarah Heal	Policy Review (Dogs Protection of Livestock Amendment Act 2025)

Dogs on Walks

The LDWA supports walk leaders in deciding whether dogs may join walks. The LDWA recognises that some members wish to bring dogs on organised walks. Local groups have different approaches in this area; there is no standard national policy, but all decisions must now reflect strengthened UK legislation on livestock protection, which comes into force 18 March 2026.

Policy Statement

Local groups and walk leaders can decide on the most appropriate approach for their group/walk based on local circumstances and times of year.

Walk leaders or walk organisers retain the authority to decide whether dogs are permitted on a walk. If dogs are allowed, this must be clearly stated in advance. Assistance dogs are welcome in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Assistance dogs are highly trained; but if a route presents unavoidable risks the walk leader should discuss with the participant in advance. In this way, individual consideration can be taken to assess if adjustments may be possible.

Legal Responsibilities (Updated for 2026)

Recent changes to UK law significantly increase the responsibilities of dog owners and those in charge of dogs during countryside access:

The **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025** introduces **stronger protections for livestock**, including:

- **Unlimited fines** for livestock worrying offences (previously capped at £1,000).
- Police can now **seize and detain dogs** believed to pose an ongoing risk.
- The law now covers incidents on **roads and public paths**, not just agricultural land.
- Expansion of the definition of livestock to include **camelids** (e.g., llamas, alpacas).
- A dog does not need to make contact with livestock to commit an offence – clearer distinction between **attacking** and **worrying** livestock (chasing or being loose among livestock is enough).

LDWA Requirements for Walks Involving Dogs

The walk leader can insist on dogs being on leads, and in particular dogs must be kept on leads anywhere where there is a possibility of livestock. Owners must provide verbal confirmation to the walk leader that their dog is covered by pet owners' liability insurance before the walk.

To comply with the updated law and protect livestock, landowners, and walkers:

- **Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times** when near livestock or in any area where livestock may reasonably be present.
- Walk leaders may require dogs to be on a lead for the entire walk.
- Owners must ensure their dog is **under close control** at all times, even when off-lead.

- Owners must provide **verbal confirmation** that their dog is covered by **pet owner's liability insurance** before the walk.
- Owners must understand that:
- A dog does **not** need to make physical contact with livestock to commit an offence; **chasing or being loose among livestock is enough.**
- They may face **unlimited fines** and potential police action if their dog worries livestock.

Walk Leader Guidance

Walk leaders should:

- Assess routes for livestock presence, terrain and seasonal risks.
- Clearly communicate dog requirements in advance (e.g., “dogs on leads at all times”).
- Remind owners of legal responsibilities at the start of the walk.
- Decline participation of any dog that appears uncontrolled or poses a risk.
- Be clear on publishing walks of any restrictions in advance.

Suggested word guidance inclusion for event-listing (for adaption by Local Groups for their websites or policies)

Dogs may be allowed on walks at the walk leader's discretion. Owners must keep dogs under close control and on a lead wherever livestock are present or likely and must confirm they have pet owner's liability insurance. Please note the strengthened 2026 livestock protection laws: police now have wider powers, fines for livestock worrying are unlimited, and incidents on public paths are included. Assistance dogs are welcome in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. *

Check the walk details for any specific dog restrictions.

*Other possible options “We apologise but unfortunately dogs (other than registered disability assistance dogs) cannot be allowed to participate in the event.”

* “While we welcome assistance dogs, we unfortunately cannot permit them on this particular walk due to [insert reason e.g. severe, unavoidable safety risks, high-difficulty terrain, steep cliffs, wildlife] that threaten the safety of both the dog and the handler. Please contact the walk leader if you wish to discuss further.”

Monitoring and review

This policy is updated to reflect legal changes coming into force in March 2026. It will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.