



## Paw Prints

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Columnist

### Sisters is not a dog park

Sisters resident Maureen Palmer recently contacted *The Nugget* with a complaint regarding off-leash dogs at Sisters Elementary School (SES).

Palmer's house backs up to SES and she recently witnessed a pair of off-leash dogs taking down a young deer with the animal crying in terror. At another time from behind her fence, she watched a young buck being attacked by off-leash dogs (the buck's tongue was torn nearly out of its mouth as she watched it limp away).

Palmer has seen off-leash dogs attack deer on three different occasions in the past year, all at the elementary school ball field next to her

home. She notices unleashed dogs playing behind the elementary school on a daily basis.

Just recently Lorna Clarke of Sisters posted an alert on Sisters UN-Swap Facebook page to all folks that take their dogs to SES ball field off-leash.

"We are witnessing weekly events of dog/deer/human interaction that are resulting in injury and eventual death to the deer and potentially to dogs not to mention what could happen to the people involved," she wrote.

She went on to say that folks should understand that Sisters is a deer migratory area, especially at the far edges of the ball field where the deer bed down at night and rest during the day.

The school yard is NOT an unleashed dog park. Keep your pet leashed out of regard for other dogs, children, and wild animals.

Off-leash dogs have also attempted to attack leashed dogs several times over the past year at Sisters Creekside Park.

There are signs in the parks that instruct all people to leash their dogs while in Sisters' city parks.

Folks have the right to walk in a public park without being confronted by loose

dogs. Dog owners do not have the right to let their dogs run loose in the park. There are dog parks in Central Oregon where your furry friends can play off-leash and there are facilities (including Central Bark) that have doggie play groups.

Does Deschutes County have a leash law? No; however it does have an "at-large" ordinance. According to Deschutes County, animal control County Code 6.08.15 defines at large to mean a dog or other animal found off the premises of the owner or keeper while the dog or animal is not under the complete control of a capable person.

Dogs get distracted. Even if your pooch is under strong verbal command, it's too easy for him to have "selective hearing" when running around off-leash. You may think you have Rover under control, but if a wild animal went running under his nose he just might chase it. What if something suddenly spooked your dog, like a vehicle backfiring? He could end up out in the street and in that moment get hit by a car. The best trained dog in the world might not respond to his human's command for many reasons.

Many pet parents think their dog is the friendliest dog in the world, and that



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Kaylee is on her harness at all times when walking outdoors.

everyone else should love their dog the way they do. But who wants a strange dog jumping on you or your dog, or otherwise interacting with you without your consent?

Being a responsible dog owner is more than just feeding Rover a healthy diet or buying the latest, trendy toys or debating the merits of positive training methods.

And you may own a very good-natured dog, but what

about all the other dogs? Your dog could be attacked by another dog if that animal considers your dog to be invading his territory. Or another dog may see your unleashed pet as a potential danger to his human. Your dog could be seriously hurt.

While off-leash, your dog could accidentally scare a child or an elderly person and cause him to fall. You are responsible for your dog's behavior.

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