



# Paw Prints

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Columnist

## Keep 'em on a leash!

Two years ago, a Sisters resident was knocked down by a non-aggressive unleashed dog while walking her dog. Her injuries were substantial and wouldn't have happened if the dog was being supervised by a responsible pet parent/owner.

Failing to control your dog is an act of negligence, even before the dog causes an injury. You are liable for your dog's actions — always.

While bites and maulings are the most common form of injuries caused by dogs, there are additional accidents responsible for thousands of injuries each year in the United States. They include knock-downs, tripping, and falling over dogs, and even head-butts. In an excitable state, a dog can jump up on you and knock you down even while on leash. Non-aggressive dogs sometimes unintentionally trip or knock people down, resulting in injuries.

Recently I was knocked

down by an unleashed dog, resulting in emergency surgery for two broken bones in the right knee. Besides broken bones there was a small ankle fracture and a hematoma in the left leg.

A rule of thumb for any pet parent, regardless of the dog's behavior, is to make sure you have a good strong leash and that you maintain control of the dog at all times.

Some pet parents will tell you "my dog will stay with me, we don't need the leash," but then the concern is focused on the other dogs.

You may own a friendly 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.

By having your dog on leash, you'll have some leverage in pulling your dog away from other dogs who are not as well behaved.

Another act of negligence is when your dog becomes aggressive-looking and reactionary to other dogs (or people) when on-leash. This is called "leash aggression." If the dog is dealing with intense frustration, there can be a loss of self-control which can increase the likelihood of a bite.

There are a variety of reasons a dog may have leash aggression and should be seen by a dog behaviorist.

Be sure you can control your dog before taking him

out in public.

Part of being a responsible pet owner means to license and provide permanent identification for pets. Spay or neuter your pets. Provide training, physical care, socialization and medical attention. Another part of being a responsible pet parent is not to allow your pet to become a threat or nuisance in the community.

Sisters has their own city codes or regulations under animal nuisance.

6.05.050 At Large

"At large" means off the premises of the owner while the dog is not under the complete control of the owner or keeper by adequate leash or harness. However, a dog in a duly recognized obedience school on field training exercise and under the direct supervision of a handler or a dog within a vehicle shall not be considered "at large." No animal or dog shall run at large. The owner or keeper is responsible for an animal or dog.

As a responsible pet-owner, you should not allow your dog to run free or be off-leash while you walk together.

Dogs get distracted. Even if your pooch is under strong verbal command, it's all too easy for him to have "selective hearing" when running around off-leash. You may think you have Fido under control, but if a cat 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,



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Ollie and Mia — always on a leash.

get hit by a car.

6.05.060 Conditions when an animal or dog is a public nuisance

An animal or dog is a nuisance if it: Disturbs any person by frequent or prolonged noises. Bites or injures a person. Places a person in fear of imminent physical injury, without provocation. Chases vehicles or people. Damages or destroys property belonging to a person other than the owner or keeper of the animal or dog. Injures or kills an animal or fowl belonging to a person other than the owner or keeper of the animal or dog.

6.05.070 Dangerous animals or dogs

A "dangerous animal or dog" means any animal or dog which has: without provocation, placed a person in fear of imminent physical injury, said fear being reasonable under

the circumstances; or has attacked a person or domestic animal without provocation; or is trained for or used in animal fighting.

No owner or keeper of a dangerous animal or dog shall permit such animal or dog to go unconfined on the premises of the owner or keeper. No owner or keeper of a dangerous animal or dog shall permit such animal or dog to go beyond the premises of such person unless such animal or dog is securely leashed and humanely muzzled or otherwise securely restrained and humanly muzzled.

Owning a dog is not just a privilege — it's a responsibility. All pet parents have a responsibility to ensure their own dogs are kept under control at all times and they behave in a way that is safe and avoids nuisance to the community.

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