

Fact Sheet



Dog walking on-lead in Belfast Coastal Reserve

Exercising and exploring the wild beaches of Belfast Coastal Reserve with your dog is a fun and popular pastime enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. To encourage sharing the beach fairly and safely, and ensure that the wild nature of the coast is protected, special regulations apply.



Where can I take my dog in the reserve?

Dog walking is allowed, on-lead, on all beaches in the reserve. Dogs are not allowed off-lead. An exception is Killarney Beach, and Port Fairy's East Beach, where dogs are allowed off-lead at specific times of day and season under Moyne Shire local laws. Dogs must be under effective control at all times. Please refer to the *Belfast Coastal Reserve - Recreational User Map* on the Parks Victoria website, and the Moyne Shire website for details.

Alternatively, within Warrnambool City Council and Moyne Shire Council there are other designated areas where dogs can be exercised on and off-lead, including beaches. Both Councils provide details on their websites.

Why is having your dog on lead so important?

By keeping your dog on-lead at all times you are helping to protect nature, other visitors and your dog.

Protecting nature

Roaming, off-lead dogs in the reserve can have a significant detrimental impact on the breeding success of beach-nesting birds, like the Hooded Plover. These birds use the reserve's beaches to create shallow scrapes in the sand as nests.

Parent birds see dogs as a threat to their offspring. When a dog approaches they will leave their nest to keep its location hidden, and won't return until the 'threat' is well out of sight. While the nest is unattended, eggs are susceptible to predation, being accidentally trodden on, or dying due to extremes of heat or cold.

Hooded Plover nest sites are protected by signage and fencing. It is an offence to allow a dog to enter these areas. Keeping your dog on a lead enables you to keep it at a safe distance. Please also do not loiter near these nest sites.

Protecting others

The nature of other dogs on the beach is not always known to you, and other people do not know the temperament of your dog. Uncontrolled dogs can create a nuisance, and cause people to be fearful for their own safety or that of their dog. In the worst cases, dogs can rush, attack or bite people, or fight with other dogs.

By keeping your dog on-lead you limit the potential for unpleasant or harmful interactions with people and dogs.

Protecting your dog

Keeping your dog on-lead keeps it safe from pest animal control programs operating in the reserve. Parks Victoria reduces fox numbers to fulfil its responsibility to protect native wildlife, and to reduce fox impacts to neighbouring farms. These programs use poisonous baits, buried at bait stations in the dunes behind the beach. Great care is taken to ensure this is as safe as possible, including warning signs visible at all nearby beach entrances.

There is, however, some risk to uncontrolled dogs. The PAPP poison used in fox baits is highly lethal if ingested by a dog. If you suspect your dog has taken a bait, immediate veterinary assistance should be sought. An antidote is available and effective if delivered in time.

If your dog is on a lead, you reduce the risk of harm from it encountering these baits in the first place.

Dog regulations

In early 2020, updated regulations will apply in the reserve. Dog walkers will need to adhere to these or risk a fine:

- Dogs must be on-lead and under control
- Dogs are allowed on beaches, but not in dunes or within 5m of dunes
- Dogs are not permitted in Hooded Plover nesting sites
- Dog walkers must keep to designated beach access tracks and car parks
- Dog walkers must pick up and remove their dog's faeces
- Dogs must not be allowed to rush at, chase, or attack wildlife.