

Your views on dogs and dog poo

Oh dear, here come the complaints! Not that anyone should be surprised, dogs let out of boats in the early morning unsupervised whilst their owner pops back into the boat for a coffee. Dogs running along the towpath (self-exercising?) as the owner cruises merrily along with no care, or opportunity to clean up the resulting mess that some poor unsuspecting boater will step in and tread into his boat. Oh and of course the joggers whose dogs trot along behind them whilst they are oblivious to what the dog is doing.

In amongst all the other complaints you will no doubt receive perhaps we should spare a thought for the poor grass cutters who regularly get splattered with the smelly mess.

I would love to say “please clean up after your much-adored pooch” but quite frankly I may need that wasted breath one day.

How timely to read this in your recent newsletter having just returned from a short trip on the South Oxford. While picking up water at Napton I was disappointed to find that a dog had defecated very near to the water point. It is bad enough to have to avoid it when it is just on the towpath but there are significant health issues when associated with contaminating water supplies. This is not the first time that I have encountered this particular problem, although it was at another waterpoint in the summer.

I continue to be amazed at the number of poo bags I see beside the towpath (and in trees!), the owner obviously feels bound to pick up the poo but is reluctant to take it to a disposal bin (however close that might be). Having encased it in plastic it is less likely to break down quickly and now leaves plastic litter.

This is definitely not a perennial gripe from a subset of the general population. Although the vast majority of dog owners do pick up after their pooch, a minority have no intention of doing so. I'm convinced that in most areas it is the same dog owners who aren't picking up, day after day after day. And it is everywhere, both urban and rural areas. Whenever, wherever you get off your boat (or walk down the towpath) you have to keep your eyes peeled. I've even known some people allowing their dogs to foul in the direct vicinity of mooring rings/posts. Then there are those who pick up but either throw the bag in the canal or hang it from a bush.

Things have got a lot better in the last couple of years, but not perfect. Dog walkers still occasionally leave dog poo in the grass between a nicely maintained towpath and the canal - just where a boater may be treading.

The other thing I saw this year was a dog walker who picked up his dog poo but then threw it into the canal!

I said to him that this wasn't a good idea as it polluted the canal to which he wasn't too concerned, I then told him a bit of a lie and said that children went into the canal which did seem to concern him.

Dog walkers still need educating!

To our experience the dog poo itself isn't any relevant problem anymore. One rarely finds some unpacked remains - now plastic bags with unique content are spread out along the tow path, in hedges and corners or floating in the canal. It's a development I find way more disgusting than the poo itself - and most definitely not good for our environment.

It has to be said that while it can be found in next to all areas, it is more visible in some. Most particular were there are no or only a few waste bins. It is a common sight to find them dumped in large numbers at bridges., usually where a connection between road and towpath exists. I would assume a dog owner being willing to pick up also being willing to carry home if there's no bin. Seems like this only holds until they leave the tow path without finding a convenient facility. Of course it may add that bridge corners in general attract empty cans and other trash, so the hurdle to drop it when leaving the canal area may be low.

Having waste bins in these locations (and in general) would resolve much of the problem - in fact it'll also help to reduce rubbish dumps along the canals in general. This isn't just an assumption, but clearly visible when comparing areas with many (and well placed/well maintained) waste bins to such without - even within the same city.

Since we own a dog, the uneven distribution is a daily experience when boating. Sometimes it's possible to drop the bag within a few meters or at most the next access point, sometimes we ship (sic) it for half a day.

In addition some nudging might be useful. No, I'm not talking about more signs. There are already way too many and most of them simply annoying. But what about making the bags bright coloured? Black bags, as they are standard thruout the UK, blend in with dark corners, hedges and the canal environment at large. With black bags 'droppers' may assume it's gone for good - no so much when coloured brightly. It is a method several cities on the continent have used with remarkable reduction of tipping. It is clear that the CRT can't force shops to sell only red bags. Still, it should be possible to support them - like convincing cities to give out only red ones, talk to bag manufacturers, pet supply shops and alike. Give it a thought.

Thanks for keeping the canals great.

P.S.: Now we just need to find someone to pack up and dispose the goose poo :))

I have seen on several occasions walkers on the towpath bag their dog's poo and then either discard the bag to the hedgerow or hang it from a tree. Worse, in my opinion to doing nothing, at least from an environmental point of view.

This item in the Update prompted me to write straight away! Of course it is right that dog owners should clear up after their pets. Most do, although when I came through Fradley Junction this summer one thoughtless and reckless owner had left a pile right by the water tap. But my gripe now is those owners who carefully put the poo in a bag and then hang it on the nearest branch or throw the bag into the bottom of the hedge. This compounds the problem. Now we have dog mess inside a container that will slow down its natural decomposition AND plastic pollution in the environment. If they are not going to dispose of the mess appropriately then it would be better for it to be flicked into the hedge base and left to decompose naturally.

I will climb down from my hobby horse now!

Don't get me started on dog poo!!!

We live on our boat on the Grand Union Leicester section, just a mile away from Foxton Locks. Last winter, as we walked to enjoy a beer at the pub, walking only just over a mile. I counted 68 bags of poo, either thrown onto the side of the towpath, or hanging as hideous decorations in the hedges and trees. This was along with five poos just left on the tow path. This made my blood boil, 68 was a very shocking amount. In the past year, there have been less bags, but as boaters we still face the horror of looking out of your kitchen window in the morning and being greeted by a pile of poo, or jumping off the boat to moor, just to land in it. I don't know what the answer is, dog owners just seem oblivious to how horrid, disgusting and damaging their darling pets poo is.

This is getting worse everywhere, unfortunately not sure what can be done unless they are caught on camera.

I have written to you before on this subject and I am really unsure what can be done about it but you did ask. I am appalled at the number of people who consider it ok to flick their dog poo into the canal. It seems boaters are as guilty of this course of action as anybody else. I appreciate that living on a boat puts the dog owner into the position of having to keep their dog poo on board until they pass a dog poo bin but, this does not excuse flicking it into the canal; neither does it excuse the other equally unacceptable course of action – hanging the used dog poo bag in a bush! Maybe more poo bins would help but, to be honest, I do not have much faith in dog owners sense of responsibility!

It can be a problem: often when I return to my long-term mooring I have to clear such. I often clear dog poo or bags of it from the towpath as well as cans/bottles from the towpath/navigation.
