

**Fort Needham Memorial Park
Off Leash Area Cleanliness Monitoring Results
April 26, 2008**

Background

A key goal of the Off Leash Park Areas Strategy is to ensure off leash areas are clean and free of dog waste. Monitoring for compliance with this goal is the responsibility of the HRM Interdepartmental Off Leash Strategy Committee.

Fort Needham Memorial Park was monitored on Saturday, April 26. Small survey flags were placed beside locations in the park where owners had failed to clean up dog waste. The entire park was surveyed.



Given the size of the park and its popularity among dog owners, the results of the survey indicated that many people were not picking up after their pets. Eighty (80) flags were used to mark locations where owners had failed to clean up after their dogs. Concentrations of dog waste were located along the fence line separating the year round and seasonal off leash areas. Deposits near bushes, under trees and in areas of high grass

were also flagged. It was evident that some of the waste was left during the winter but most had occurred recently.



Flags along sports field fence



Flags by tree in year round off leash area

The flags were to have been left in place at the park until Monday, April 28 to alert the general public to the health hazard and to remind dog owners of their responsibility to pick up after their pets. However, one responsible pet owner arrived at the park with her dog midway through the survey and quickly started cleaning up at each flagged location. She explained that she would contact the park “regulars” to help her complete the clean up later that day. A site inspection on Tuesday, April 29 confirmed that the work had been done.

It is evident that there is a dedicated and well-organized group of dog owners who regularly use the park. It’s unlikely that they are not picking up after their dogs but it’s also apparent that there are other regular park users who are not responsible pet owners.

Gentle reminders and peer pressure are often mentioned as helpful strategies to remind dog owners to pick up after their pets however chronic non-compliance should be reported to HRM at: 490 4000. A description of the dog, owner, time and location of the offence can be used by animal control and bylaw officials to identify offenders.

Recommendations

The number of flags placed in the park was significant however this was mitigated by the immediate cleanup. The park will be monitored again in the near future to establish whether dog waste will be a recurring problem.

The cleanup of the park has provided the Interdepartmental Off Leash Strategy Committee with a baseline to measure ongoing compliance by dog owners. If, after an additional month of monitoring, it appears that dog waste is a chronic problem the Committee may decide to consider revoking dog related privileges in the Park by invoking Section 3.4 of the Strategy

3.4 Discretionary Park Redesignation Process

At its discretion, the Committee may revoke an on leash or off leash area designation and impose a “No Dogs” designation in a park or sportsfield where dog owners chronically fail to follow the “Stoop and Scoop” provisions of the Dog By-law. The Committee may also choose to apply a “No Dogs” designation in a park or sportsfield where chronic user conflicts or environmental impacts cannot be resolved. The Committee will prepare an information report to the responsible Council stating its concerns and its intention to redesignate the affected park. This will be accompanied by a published public notice (14) days before the “No Dogs” designation is scheduled to take effect. On a semi-annual basis, reinstatement appeals will be considered by the Committee.