

DOGS ON BHI - LAWS AND TIPS

Bald Head Island is a very dog-friendly place. You see dogs everywhere on the Island - riding in golf carts, walking along the wynds or beach strand, at the ferry landing, or waiting at the post office while their owners are checking their mail. The following information addresses the Village's laws regarding dogs and provides a few tips for first-timers, Islanders, guests, and visitors.

Village Laws on Dogs

Dogs Must be Restrained - Per Village Ordinance Section 4-521, unrestrained dogs are not allowed on Bald Head Island, whether by intentional act or omission of the owner. What does unrestrained mean? It means that the dog is NOT:

1. Under the immediate control of its owner, or
2. Within the limits and boundaries of the private property on which its owner or any person authorized by the owner to keep the animal resides, or
3. On or in any vehicle being operated or parked upon any public or private street and physically confined within the vehicle so as to prevent it from exiting the vehicle.

Dogs on the Beach Must be Leashed During Turtle Season - Village Ordinance Section 4-521 states that from sunset to sunrise of every day during turtle season (May 1 through November 15) any dog on any beach must be physically restrained by a leash. The leash must not exceed ten feet in length. One end of the leash must be attached to the dog and the other must be held by the dog's owner or custodian and by which such owner or custodian is physically capable of controlling the dog.

Feces Must be Removed and Disposed of Properly - Village Ordinance Section 4-521 states that dog (and cat) owners must immediately remove feces deposited on public property, including the beach strand, or on private property unless given consent of the owner. Feces must be disposed of in an appropriate manner. The Village's beach accesses have doggie bag dispensers for waste and waste receptacles for the waste once it's picked up. The Village recommends that dog owners dispose of dog waste in *the* public waste receptacles, or the receptacles supplied by the Village for regular household waste. Some sewer systems do not allow the flushing of dog feces; BHI does not have any restrictions on this method of disposal. Dog waste should not be used in compost that will be used for consumable vegetation because of the parasites and bacteria that may be present.

Violation of this ordinance could result in a civil fine of \$50 or a class 3 misdemeanor and a fine of up to \$500.

Excessive Barking - Excessive barking is generally prohibited by the Village's noise ordinance (Sec. 16-132 - 133). The ordinance states, "The creation of any unreasonably loud and disturbing noise that would annoy, frighten, or disturb the quiet, comfort or repose of any reasonable person of ordinary sensibilities in the vicinity is prohibited within the Village. In determining whether a violation of this section has occurred, the public safety department may take into account the volume, duration, time, location, and other circumstances surrounding the noise." It goes on to state, "The following activities, among others, are hereby declared unreasonably loud and disturbing noises, but such enumeration shall not be deemed to be exclusive (4) the keeping of any animal, including but not limited to a bird or dog, which makes frequent or long continuing sounds, in a manner that is likely to disturb persons in the vicinity outside the structure or property where the animal sounds are generated." Please call 911 to report this type of disturbance to the Department of Public Safety.

Dangerous Dogs - The Village's code of ordinances also addresses dangerous dogs (Sec. 4-121-126). It is important to report all incidents with a dog that has been deemed dangerous, potentially dangerous, or when the status is unknown to the Department of Public Safety by calling 911 so the incident can be investigated. All ordinance violations should be called into the Department of Public Safety. On Bald Head Island, please call 911. Let the operator know that you are on Bald Head Island. Using the 911 system will ensure that an officer is responsive to your concern immediately. Using 911 allows the department to keep track of all calls for service that are received. All calls are recorded for investigative purposes.

Tips about Dogs for First Timers

Here are some tips about dogs for first-time visitors and guests:

The ferry - The ferry is likely going to be full of people, and there will likely be other dogs. If it is your dog's first experience on a boat, it will be nervous. Make sure you are ready to calm your dog and restrain them, if needed, to keep them from getting too close to dogs that may not play well with others. You and your dog must ride outside of the cabin no matter what the weather, since dogs are not permitted inside the cabin. Some surfaces on the ferry get very hot, so take that into account, as well. A thick towel or blanket may be useful to protect your dog's paws.

New smells - There will be new smells on the Island, and your pet is going to be distracted by them and will want to track down those smells. Be sure to keep a tight grip on the leash when you arrive and know that if they have the chance, they will run!

Secure them in the house - When you leave the house, make sure your pet is secure in the home. Some porches have screens and screened doors that are easy for dogs to push on to escape.

Dog Park - There is a Dog Park on BHI, located at 230 N. Bald Head Wynd and adjacent to BHA's Community Garden. There are separate fenced-in areas for small and large dogs with significant shade and plenty of space to run and play. It includes a seating area for pet owners and water bowls with a water source for pets to hydrate.

General Tips Regarding Dogs on BHI

Lost dogs - If your dog is lost, please call 911 so the Department of Public Safety can assist in locating your pet. Sometimes found pets are reported to the department or dropped off at the station. Lost and found pet information is often posted on the Village's social media sites (DPS Facebook, Village Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram).

At the beach - When you are at the beach, make sure your dog has plenty of water to drink. Bringing a shade source is also a good idea; the sand gets very hot. Umbrellas and canopies are permitted on the beach but must be taken down nightly (must be removed between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. year-round). It is wise to prevent your dogs from drinking salt water. Small amounts of salt water could cause diarrhea, and too much can lead to vomiting and dehydration.

Protect from predators & ticks - Leaving your pet unattended near the lagoons is not recommended. Alligators make the lagoons their home year-round on the Island and can jump four feet vertically out of the water. It is best to observe them from at least 20 feet away, with or without your pet. Coyotes are another predator on BHI that you need to be careful about. Do not leave your pet unsupervised outdoors and do not feed them outside because the food will attract coyotes and unwanted pests. Ticks are a given on BHI, with its shady areas and moist overgrowth. Make sure your pet is up to date on any flea and tick medications or check with your vet to see if other measures need to be taken.

Veterinary emergencies - There is not an emergency veterinarian on the Island. Be prepared to call for transport off the Island so you can quickly get to an emergency vet on the mainland. You should have phone numbers for several transport companies and emergency vets so you can contact one who can help you when you need them.