

Pet, Service Animal, and Service-Animal-in-Training Policy

Updated March 20, 2025

Pets

Pet owners are expected to abide by the following policies to maintain the welcome of furry friends at Rowan County Parks and Recreation Department locations, including at all events and programs. Owners are socially, legally, and financially responsible and liable for their pet's behavior at all times.

- All pets must be on a non-retractable leash with a maximum length of 6 feet and under the care and control of the person responsible for the pet at all times while at a Rowan County Parks and Recreation Department location, event, or program.
 - Even pets in bags and carriers must abide by this requirement.
- Please ensure that leashes do not get tangled in equipment, tablecloths, displays, tent legs, etc. and do not become a tripping hazard.
- All pets must be kept away from equipment being used by the Parks Department staff to facilitate their work, event, or program – both head and tail ends.
- You are responsible for your pet's business. Please prevent the pet from relieving itself in the publicly shared areas. If your pet does make a mess, you are responsible for cleaning it up. Please be sure to bring your own waste bags to pick up after your pet; pet waste bags are also available on-site.
- Any damages caused by a pet (damages are to be deemed by the Parks Department) will be the responsibility of the pet owner and may include the costs associated with the replacement or cleaning of the damaged item(s).
- Pets are not allowed in public buildings.
- Event vendors are not allowed to bring pets under any circumstances.
- Emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals are pets. They do not qualify as service animals because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task for a visitor with a disability.
- Pets must comply with local vaccination, licensing, and registration requirements.

Service Animal and Service-Animal-in-Training Policy

A service animal (trained or in training) is not a pet. A service animal (trained or in training) is a dog or a mini-horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a visitor with a disability. In North Carolina, service-animals-in-training have the same rights as fully trained service animals.

- The tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability unless they are in training.

- Service animals (trained or in training) are legally permitted anywhere that visitors can go unless they could be a safety risk or if they would require significant changes to the park's operations.
- Service Animals (trained or in training) may be asked to leave the premises if:
 - The animal's behavior is out of control, which includes, but is not limited to, vicious or aggressive behavior toward other people or animals, excessive barking and/or growling, jumping or running at other people or animals.
 - The animal is not housebroken.
 - The animal is not under the control of the handler.
- Service animals (trained only) must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless these devices interfere with the Service Animal's work or the visitor's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the visitor must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- Service animals (trained only) are not required to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.
- Service animals (in training only) must wear a collar, leash, and an identifying harness or cape that indicates they are in training.
- Some animals at Rowan Wildlife Adventures and/or The Stanback Barnyard may react strongly to the presence of dogs or any animals outside of their enclosure as a threat. A few areas on the grounds have animals that may react this way. These areas are restricted for safety reasons, and no animals may enter these areas. Look for signs posted to alert visitors of restricted areas.
- In situations where it is not obvious that the dog or mini-horse is a service animal, park staff may ask only two specific questions: (1) is the animal a service animal required because of the visitor's disability? and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform? Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the animal, require that the animal demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the visitor's disability.
- The trainer is responsible for any damage caused by the animal while in a business.
- All animals must comply with local vaccination, licensing, and registration requirements.

In an effort to maintain the safety of all park guests, and event and program attendees, if your pet or service animal/service-animal-in-training does not abide by the above policies, the animal may be asked to vacate the location, event, or program.