

## DOG OWNER GUIDELINES ON FORT MORGAN PENINSULA BEACHES

### Beach Etiquette for Dogs

- Always keep your dog leashed when there is a leash law.
- Always clean up after your dog by using a poop bag or pooper scooper.
- Do not let your dog visit with other beach-goers or dogs, unless invited.
- If using an official off-leash area, your dog needs to be well-behaved and must obey your verbal commands.



A wet, happy Lab pup © DogFriendly.com

Several areas of Fort Morgan community are experiencing serious problems with aggressive and uncontrolled dogs. Some members believe we need a leash ordinance to keep residents and visitors (and their pets) safe. Other members believe we should maintain our well-known “dog-friendly” beaches without leashes required. The existing Baldwin County ordinance simply states that dogs should be under the control of owners. So far, we are the only Alabama Gulf beach that allows dogs on the beach. Whether that changes in the future is mainly up to visitors and resident dog owners and how responsible they are.

Typical incidents which have led Fort Morganites to heatedly debate this subject and which have led to strict leash laws in other communities are:

- 1) Dogs off-leash chasing and attacking other dogs
- 2) Dogs off-leash jumping up on children and elders
- 3) Dogs off-leash defecating on the beach and on other people’s private property with no pick-up
- 4) Dogs off-leash urinating on people’s beach towels and chairs
- 5) Owners of off-leash dogs refusing to leash them or control them even when asked politely

State law requires that owners keep dogs either on the owner’s property or, if away from home, under the owner’s control. It’s common that too few dogs are well trained and under the owner’s control.

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach prohibit pets on the beach, as do Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and nearby Florida beaches.

The Fort Morgan Civic Association requested our members to speak their minds on the issue of dog control. Based on more than fifty responses, it appears that opinions are about equally divided between pro and con regarding a revision to the Baldwin County dog ordinance. Very few of our community members wish to totally ban dogs from our beaches. However, in light of the increase in tourists and visitors and due to recent worsening of the problem dog situation, the only currently available solution to problem dogs is to prevail upon those who bring their dogs to the beach (or into our neighborhoods as visitors and renters) to follow the County and State laws “to the letter”—keeping dogs “under owners’ control.” All FMCA members who commented on the issue believe that “dog owners should be responsible:”

- (1) Keep dogs under control—by leash or by formal training and voice command**
- (2) Be extremely considerate when other people are nearby—especially children and the elderly**
- (3) “Scoop the poop” whenever they’re off their own property**
- (4) Prevent dogs from chasing others pets or children**
- (5) Prevent dogs from jumping up on children or the elderly**

Baldwin County Commissioners have been requested to expand the county dog control ordinance. Not all Commissioners agree that the issue is critical enough to call for their action. If you wish to take further action on this issue, suggestions have come from various members:

(1) Call the Sheriff's office (non-emergency 972-6802) *each and every time* a dog is running loose, off-leash, or out of control.

(2) Call County Animal Control (972-6834) to report a wandering animal. To cover the entire county, there are only two animal control officers. Their on-duty hours are Monday-Friday, 7am to 4pm. If you can safely contain the animal until they arrive—45+ minutes, on average—they will pick it up; if not, they will come to investigate as soon as their workload permits. Off-hours: call the Sheriff's Office (972-6802); **if under personal attack: 911!**

**(3) If you feel you are personally in danger or your pet is in danger of attack, call 911 ASAP.**

(4) Send letters, emails, and phone calls to our County Commissioners requesting replacement of county beach signs at all beach access points that were washed away by Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina and never replaced. New signs must make it clear that dogs are only allowed on the beach under strict control by owner, that owner is responsible for picking up feces left by their dog, and that violations will be reported to the Sheriff's Office and result in citations and substantial fines.

(5) Collect and forward to Baldwin County Commission as many petitions as possible, designating which signatures are residents, which are property owners, and which are visitors. All are important, since Fort Morgan Peninsula's paying visitors are **significant contributors** to the County budget.

(6) Attend every County Commission meeting, sign up for the agenda beforehand, and complain about the issue. It is recommended that you go prepared with a suggested solution to the problem. Complaints alone do not guarantee or encourage solutions.

**Protect yourself from aggressive animals with the safest means possible.**



Paws in the Dunes by Fort Morgan

State Historic Site Staff

### **Fort Morgan State Historic Site**

The Fort allows dogs on leashes except in the Museum. The Gulf-front beach is off-limits for dogs, but part of their bay-front beach allows dogs. See their website for locations allowed: [www.fort-morgan.org](http://www.fort-morgan.org)

### **Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge ~ No Dogs Allowed!**

Dogs are not allowed on Bon Secour Refuge beaches or anywhere on the Refuge at any time. This includes, among other locations, the beach at the end of Mobile Street and the Gulf-side beach at Fort Morgan State Historic Site. Stop by the Refuge Office and pick up a map at 12295 W. Fort Morgan Road (State Highway 180), at about the 12-mile marker. Hours are Monday-Friday, 7:30AM-3:30PM.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FORT MORGAN BEACHES,  
SEE THE SECTION UNDER 'BEACH GUIDELINES' TITLED  
"BEACH ACCESS"**