

Auckland NOWEast & Bays **Courier**

Seeing red over dog laws

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Sports club members and dog owners are going head-to-head over the best use of sports fields.

Auckland Council's proposed dog bylaw and policy is open for public submission until the end of the month (East & Bays Courier, February 3) with the new rules coming into force in October.

Shore Rd Reserve and Bloodworth Park in Remuera are among the few sports fields in the area flagged as off-leash areas for exercising dogs when they're not being used by clubs. Submitters are asked to say whether they would like this to continue.

The council proposes that dogs be banned from any sports surface, marked field, artificial turf, court or archery range. Dogs will also have to be kept under control and on a leash at all times in the vicinity of any sports surface when it's in use.

Dog lover Sean Shepperson presented his views to the Orakei Local Board on February 1.

The rules on park use have changed several times in the 22 years he's lived at Hobson Bay.

"My big thing is keeping them local parks for local people. These parks have enjoyed a legacy exemption since the mid-1990s allowing dogs to be exercised off-leash on the sports fields only," he says.

"The peripheral areas are not permitted as off-leash recreational areas.

"Now effectively dog owners can't take their dogs off-leash altogether."

He says the parks are the reason he has lived in the area for so long – and if he can't walk his two beloved pups off-leash he will have to give them away.

"It's always been a coexistence between sportspeople and dog off-leash walkers.

"This is critical for me because I have two medium-sized dogs. When you own medium-sized dogs, you can't just walk them on-leash. They have so much energy to burn they need to run around."

Mr Shepperson wants the rules to stay the same but with an emphasis on making owners pick up their dogs' droppings.

Parnell Cricket Club spokesman Bryan Haggitt says sportspeople are not anti-dog – but the real issue is the mess left behind.

Mr Haggitt suggests allowing people to walk their dogs on the peripheral areas away from the sports fields.

"The number of people who stand on our pitch and throw their tennis ball, then the dog comes back and leaves a deposit, then they leave. It's unbelievable.

"Faeces spread disease. Dogs carry a lot of diseases that can be passed on to humans and to have faeces on the playing fields is disgusting.

"Put it this way. A pitcher goes to pitch, he'll pick up the ball and lick his fingers to get a better grip – the game's been played like that for ages. It doesn't bear thinking about if it's rolled in something."

Visit www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/bylaws for more information on the changes or to make a submission.

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