



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

RECREATION AND PARKS  
DEPARTMENT

## **Dog Park FAQ Sheet**

### **Why is all of Wheeler Dog Park closed?**

The small size of Wheeler Park coupled with the high use makes maintaining the grass a challenge. That is why last summer we opened half of the park on a 30-day rotating basis\* in an attempt to keep the grass growing in the areas designated for off-leash dogs. However, when the grass stopped growing this past fall and the park was still being used, it didn't take long for the grass to quickly erode and the ground to become barren and muddy.

### **The turf in Wheeler Dog Park is in poor condition and much of the park is dirt/mud. Why hasn't it been repaired?**

Due to intense use, it is extremely difficult to keep a good stand of grass growing in dog parks especially ones that are very small such as Wheeler. In addition, grass does not grow year round in Ohio, and thus the window of opportunity to keep grass in place is limited to only seven or eight months of the year. This becomes even more challenging in those late fall and winter months when there is snowfall and rain, which softens the turf and leaves it vulnerable to damage; i.e. it quickly becomes a mud pit. Thus, our only option is to fence off areas to nurture the ground for regrowth so that portions of the park will be available for the majority of every year.

### **Why can't we use the side of Wheeler Dog Park that has grass?**

We know that park visitors want to use the half of the park that currently has grass, but the reality is that grass does not grow in the winter in Ohio. So, if we let people utilize the grass area now, it too will quickly lose its turf and the entire park will be a mud pit and will stay that way until at least June. Thus, in order to have a portion of the park ready for spring, our only option is to close the entire park for the next couple of months.

### **Why can't we use Wheeler Dog Park when the ground is frozen?**

In a normal winter, that might be possible, but this winter has not been consistent in temperatures. We have had temperatures in the 60's one week and then in the 20's the following week primarily caused by the El Nino. Thus, the ground has not been frozen for any given length of time in which any level of use will not cause damage. In future years, it is something that we can consider on a daily basis during the winter months, but again, it will always be dependent on having temperatures 32 degrees or lower for much longer periods of time than we have had so far this winter.

### **Why have all the watering bowls and containers been removed from Wheeler Dog Park?**

To reduce the risk of passing diseases from one dog to another, all containers left at our dog parks are subject to being removed for the safety and well-being of all dogs. While pet owners are welcome to bring their own bowls for their dogs to use, owners must take all containers with them when leaving the park or the bowls will be removed by park personnel.

### **When will Wheeler Dog Park re-open?**

It is our intent to open Wheeler Dog Park at the beginning of May assuming that we have spring weather that allows for a good grass growing season.

### **Why are other dog parks not closed?**

Park size is important in which larger dog parks are more successful because it allows for the usage to be spaced out rather than being contained to a smaller area. For example, Wheeler Dog Park is two acres, while Sycamore Fields Dog Park is five-and-a-half acres, Big Walnut Dog Park is three acres, and Spindler Road Dog Park is four acres. However, in all cases of dog parks that have turf, portions of each one have to be closed periodically for reseeding of the grass. It is also important to note that the amount of usage is also a significant factor in the success of a dog park. Relative to Wheeler, it is one of our most popular dog parks and therefore, visitation is higher and more frequent than some of the other dog parks.

### **Why are there holes in the dog parks turf?**

Dogs, by nature, dig holes and since we do not have staff posted within our parks, we are unable to fill those holes on any consistent basis but we do make repairs as often as we can especially when park visitors bring them to our attention. So, please do not hesitate to contact us at 311, or by calling 614-645-3350.

### **My dog is very small and can go under fences or gates.**

We do our best to repair fencing and gate damage, but it is likely there may always be holes near the fences due to dogs or other animals digging in the ground. The weather can also cause damage to the turf making it easier for dogs to go under fences and/or gates. If you encounter any areas that need our attention, please do not hesitate to call 311 or you may contact us directly at 614-645-3350.

### **The Big Walnut Dog Park doesn't have water available for the dogs, why not?**

The distance to run a waterline is too costly and there is no funding available at this time. Thus, we suggest that you bring your own water in a container, which you must take with you when you leave the park or it will be removed by park personnel.

### **If a vicious dog is at a dog park, what should we do?**

The best suggestion is to contact the Franklin County Dog Warden/Animal Control at 614-525-3400.

*\*We are rotating the open and closed sides as close to month by month as possible. When working with grass and all of the variables that go with growing it, there will be some ever-changing scenarios. We shoot for as close to the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month as possible. That day could possibly fall on a weekend which we would then open it up the following Monday or possibly the Friday before based on our professional opinion. Another factor determining rotation is precipitation amounts.*

*When working with a living plant, it may not always be an exact 30 day mark. We strive to make it as close as possible, however there are many variables that could change date every month. If we notice that the closed side is not coming in as quickly as expected and that the open side could withstand a few extra days, then that is direction we will go.*