



Wolvercote Commoners'

NEWSLETTER January 2018

HAPPY NEW YEAR

to all our readers and may 2018 be happy and healthy

The New Year is always a time to look forward to what may be in store for us in the coming months. This year however a serious issue has arisen which, although already covered at length, has now reached a point when something must be done if we are to maintain the well-being of Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common. We are sorry but yet again, it is the coexistence of dogs and livestock on Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common.

In 2017 we had correspondence from various dog walkers and, although we responded, we felt it would be helpful to bring it to a wider audience. These are the main points raised:

- dogs are possibly being poisoned by eating cow or horse faeces;
- it seems to tie in with livestock worming;
- over the last two years 40+ dogs walked on the Meadow have been taken ill with vomiting and diarrhoea;
- contact with the Oxford Council (Parks), DEFRA and the Environmental Health and Environment Agency however, with little response;
- vet said "a lot of dogs at this time of year show similar symptoms" (due, in his opinion, to livestock worming);
- one Wolvercote dog owner incurred very high vet bills as well as nearly losing their dog;
- can worming times be notified by signs?
- it would be helpful to know how long wormer stays toxic on the ground, what brands are used and why no signs are put up.

Here is our edited response to those who contacted us:

Thank you for your email regarding dogs becoming ill due to contaminated cattle faeces. We realise this is distressing for dog owners and have raised it with the graziers and the Oxford Council at a recent Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common meeting. We are also meeting with the Oxford Park Ranger. However, there is a problem on both sides. Over recent years there has been a considerable increase in dog walking on the Meadow and Common, especially with the proliferation of professional dog walkers (sometimes walking 6 or 7 dogs at a time). With this increase there

has been a corresponding increase in dog waste which, in many cases, is not being cleared up by the owners. Unfortunately this has a knock-on effect on the cattle. Dog faeces is often contaminated with Neospora which is dangerous to cattle and for this reason worming has been increased. We have had discussions with the graziers and over the past ten years they have gradually increased worming from once a season to as many as 3 times. This has been necessary because of the number of livestock infected with neosporosis. The graziers could put up notices when the worming is done and what type of wormer is used. However, the wormer is present in the faeces for some time after worming. Consequently to prevent the dogs from eating it they would have to be kept under control (ie on a lead) during the danger period. The Meadow and Commons are a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and designated grazing land. The future health of the area's flora depends heavily on adequate grazing for its natural balance, therefore we must safeguard the future of the grazing rights. Sadly, if the graziers were forced to find alternative grazing this could lead to a rapid deterioration of the area, something, as its custodians, we must avoid. The Commoners ran a campaign to encourage dog walkers to remove their dog's waste from the area. We published articles in our Newsletters and put posters around the area but with little success. We are discussing more permanent signage with the Council and hope that with a concentrated effort, we can work together to find a solution beneficial to both sides.....

We make no apologies for labouring this subject but it is obvious that there is no simple solution.

The Meadow and Common are such valuable assets to Wolvercote as well as Oxford and we would never want to see their use restricted. We will however continue to work on improving signage, notification of worming treatments and to call on all those who enjoy the area to encourage responsible dog exercise and the picking up of dog faeces. It would be devastating if the graziers had to find alternative grazing as no-one wants to see the deterioration of Port Meadow or Wolvercote Common.

If anyone has any comments or ideas don't hesitate to share them with us – our email address is below

Don't forget Village Work Mornings second Saturday of every month

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (bring gloves, wellies and any gardening tools you have). Children welcome

www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk - wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk

Chair: Angie Goff (07903866656) Secretary: Mary Brown (01865 236897)