

Fouling the streets

Text: Jess Baulcry



An average walk to my local bus stop is like navigating a mine field. OK, so one false step won't result in the loss of limbs. But, it does mean I will land, foot first, in dog mess.

The Bonnevoie area of Luxembourg City is one of the worst culprits for dog walkers not cleaning up after their pets.

And yet, despite this faecal

phenomena, Luxembourg City Council (VDL), which is located at the edge of the district, receives perhaps one complaint per year on the subject.

VDL already provides equipment to encourage owners of the City's 4,084 dogs to do their bit. It has installed some 360 stations distributing "poo bags", which owners can use to pick up their pet's mess and drop into one of

the many specified bins. According to VDL, each year 800,000 bags are used. So, why are we still seeing mess on the streets and in parks?

Luciano Da Conceicao Asonso of dog walking service Dogwalker.lu believes people are too disgusted to do this. "I think that people just don't want to pick up their dog's faeces. It's a question of being disgusted by the act of picking it up and carrying the bag to the nearest bin", said the entrepreneur. "I think we already have a lot of resources here in Luxembourg, including the bags. I have to say that Luxembourg is very clean because they hire people to keep it that way. But it's not the solution to make someone else clean up the mess. I think that we have to make people take responsibility. People have to not be scared to tell other people to pick it up. To offer them a bag for example."

While being unsightly and unpleasant smelling, the greatest risk of allowing dogs to foul in public places is to health. Bacteria in the waste can cause stomach upsets if ingested and worse, blindness, if brought into contact with the eye.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that many dog owners believe that the

funds raised through the dog licence fee should be used to clean up the pavements and parks.

Pet psychologist Tania Fettes said: "I find this shocking. We also pay a lot of taxes, but that's not a argument to defecate on the streets! Nowadays, dogs are not very popular with the society, thinking about breed specific legislations, big evil dogs biting and murdering children..., dog owners must behave in a more positive way, if they want to be more liked by their neighbours for example. So they are responsible for the mess and dirt they leave behind. I have to observe people letting their dogs relieve themselves and passing on, not caring at all. But, if every dog owner would act this way, then every pavement and every park will one day be covered."

Local authorities in other countries have attempted to tackle the problem by introducing fines. In Germany, for example, a person who does not clean up after their dog can be fined 35 euros and in Israel the fine is the equivalent of several hundred euros. VDL, however, says it has no plans to introduce a fine any time soon.

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