

# Bandy Field Off-Leash Observations 2019-2023

## Off-Leash Dogs Observed at Bandy Field Nature Park

	Observations	Off-leash	On-leash	% Off-leash
<b>2019</b>	<b>1708</b>	<b>1340</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>3691</b>	<b>2713</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>3803</b>	<b>2910</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>3158</b>	<b>2368</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>2310</b>	<b>1763</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14670</b>	<b>11094</b>	<b>3576</b>	<b>76%</b>

2023 Data is through October

2019		2020		2021		2022*		2023**	
Average Dogs Off-Leash Per Hour		Average Dogs Off-Leash Per Hour		Average Dogs Off-Leash Per Hour		Average Dogs Off-Leash Per Hour		Average Dogs Off-Leash Per Hour	
7AM	5.2	7AM	6.0	6am	6	6am		6am	
8AM	5.4	8AM	6.0	7am	6	7am	8	7am	7
9AM	6.0	9AM	6.0	8am	5	8am	7	8am	6
10AM	5.4	10AM	6.0	9am	5	9am	5	9am	5
11AM	6.1	11AM	4.0	10am	4	10am	5	10am	8
Noon	6.5	Noon	6.0	11am	4	11am	4	11am	5
1PM	6.0	1PM	6.0	Noon	3	Noon	4	Noon	5
2PM	4.4	2PM	5.0	1pm	3	1pm	4	1pm	5
3PM	5.9	3PM	6.0	2pm	5	2pm	4	2pm	4
4PM	7.2	4PM	8.0	3pm	5	3pm	3	3pm	5
5PM	7.8	5PM	8.0	4pm	8	4pm	7	4pm	6
6PM	8.5	6PM	6.0	5pm	5	5pm	8	5pm	5
7PM	5.7	7PM	4.0	6pm	9	6pm		6pm	
Daily	80	Daily	77	Daily	68	Daily	59	Daily	61
Yearly	29200	Yearly	28105	Yearly	24820	Yearly	21535	Yearly	18544

\* 2022 had 2 less hourly observations

\*\* 2023 had 2 less hourly observations and the total average is through October

# Richmond Animal Care and Control reports good year

EM HOLTER  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Richmond Animal Care and Control has come a long way in the past 10 years — euthanasia rates are down and adoptions are up. Despite this, the department is struggling.

Christie Peters, the department's deputy director, presented the latest round of numbers to city's Public Safety Standing Committee Tuesday, highlighting the department's successes as well as its problems.

As the only 24-hour, seven-day-a-week open-admission public shelter in the city, the department provides care to an average of 3,000 animals each year. In 2013, the department re-

ported an annual euthanasia rate of 1,500 per year. Now, the rate has dropped significantly. As of 2022, the average yearly rate is 300.

While the goal is to save 90% of the animals that come through the shelter, Peters said it has been a difficult target to hit. But the department is working to meet it.

The 80% decrease in euthanasia rates directly correlates with an increase in adoptions as well as returns to owners.

In 2012, more animals were euthanized than adopted or returned. Now, the department reports more adoptions and returns than euthanizations.

According to Peters, the department offers numerous opportunities for folks to keep their pets.

This includes helping with the costs of food and other supplies through the department's pets pantry.

Additionally, the department will provide dog houses as well as cost reductions on a case-by-case basis.

While this, along with donations, has helped decrease numbers, Peters said the department still faces its fair share of problems.

"There's more emergencies and more nonsense happening. We just can't catch up. We are drowning," Peters said. "I hope this isn't a sign of the times to come. I hope next year will be better."

On average, the department receives 30 calls for service a day.

These calls relate to stray animals, severe abuse or neglect, bite reports and sick or injured wildlife calls. Last year, the department responded to 11,000 calls for service.

According to Peters, this year has been the worst she has seen in her decade-long tenure. The department, which is operating with a seven-person team, has seen a drastic increase in its call volume.

As a result, it is not able to address every call that comes in. Instead, the department is prioritizing based on emergency level. Calls regarding strays and off-leash dogs are considered "bottom of the barrel" priority.

This year, the department has seen an increase in cases of sick,


abandoned or abused animals. Peters attributes some factors to the pandemic, but the city, like many other localities in the South, is facing an increase in canine parvovirus and flu cases.


In one week, Peters said her team picked up eight dogs that had died from parvo and were abandoned.

"I've never seen anything like it. It's like the savagery of this year is really heartbreaking," Peters said.

Currently, the shelter is located at 1600 Chamberlayne Ave. and has the capacity to house 90 large dogs and 166 small dogs or cats.

Em Holter (804) 649-6178  
eholter@timesdispatch.com  
@EmHolterNews on Twitter


ONLINE PAYMENTS & SERVICES | JOBS | CITY NEWS



**Animal Care & Control**
About Us
Adopt
Animal Control
Get Involved
License/Permits
Lost & Found
Donate

help save the lives of homeless pets in need!



▼ Leash Law (Sec. 4-243)

The free roaming of dogs is prohibited. All dogs must be kept under restraint or confined in an enclosure. Dogs must be walked on a leash when off the owner's property. An electric collar or other similar electronic device does not qualify as a leash, lead, or other means of physical restraint. The City of Richmond leash law does not apply to cats.

See the code [here](#).

▼ Dogs in Parks (Sec. 4-246)

It shall be unlawful for the owner or any person in charge of any dog, whether licensed or unlicensed, to allow such dog to go unleashed in any City park into which it is not unlawful for such dog to enter or be taken.



## **Bandy Field Timeline & Incidents Involving Off-Leash Dogs**

- 10/3/2019 Asked ACC for assistance: they thought our suggestion to consider hiring off-duty police was best idea
- 10/15/2019 ACC responded and warned one violator: then sympathized with a dog owner that dogs need a place to run
- 10/17/2019 I asked police to patrol in the busy evening hours: they said rush hour is too busy for them
- 10/27/2019 I asked the ACC for just one hour a week patrolling in the park: told not enough staff
- 10/29/2019 When I asked ACC to please not just drive by the park I was told again to try off-duty police
- 2/10/2020 City Council Meeting: Requested 2 more ACC officers to patrol parks.
- 3/16/2020 Resolution for two more ACC officers approved by city council
- 4/1/2020 All ACC patrols halted due to covid-19
- 11/5/2020 Letter sent to the Mayor requesting ACC patrol one hour a week: no response
- 1/15/2021 ACC responded to assessment of 30,000 off leash in 2020 was that it was safe as no bites were reported
- 11/16/2021 I was accosted by a German Shepard: a volunteer was chased through the woods by another dog
- 12/12/2021 We saw deer from the park being chased by two dogs a half mile from the nature park

### **Incidents**

- Our key observer is in his 80's and asks that dogs be leashed: He is routinely treated with disrespect
- We have had dog excrement placed in a neighbors mail box
- I have heard a regular visitor tell a new visitor not to be concerned about the leash law
- Regular's incorrectly tell new visitors the city can't control the back of the park saying it is in Henrico
- In 2020 we called the ACC 55 times when 8 or more were off leash: they came into the park twice
- Poop is often a problem as off-leash owners don't keep track of their dogs while talking
- The dog owners actually have created a dog club called "Bandy Buddies" on Facebook
- Many days doberman pinchers are routinely seen running at-large at the park
- Turf ware leads to grassless areas and pot holes where the dogs run wild

## Public Safety Meeting 11/28/2023: Off-Leash Dogs at the City Parks

- How is safety at Richmond's parks measured? The ACC apparently determines safety by the numbers of injured citizens. I know of two instances that required hospitalizations at Bandy Field this year. One of those has required reconstructive surgery and months of rehabilitation.
- Christie Peters has indicated in the past that BF is safer than the other parks, which are hundreds of acres larger. With only about 8 acres of open space, when there are just a few off-leash dogs all in a pack, the perception is that the park is unsafe.
- All citizens are aware that dogs are unpredictable. There is no way to determine if a dog is truly friendly or perhaps very aggressive and dangerous.
- Some people are afraid of all dogs. Some people are physically challenged. Some have vision issues. Some are toddlers. Some are elderly. Some like to go for a run without being chased. Some obey the law and are at a disadvantage when their dog is leashed, and packs of dogs challenge them. All citizens prefer not to step in poop. All dog owners know it is wrong to have an off-leash dog in a public area.
- Park usage by citizens is determined by "perceived safety". If dogs are off-leash there is a concern about safety. That is the reason the city has a leash law. At Bandy Field 75% of dogs are off-leash. This is based on the 14,670 observations we have made at the park during the past five years. 11,094 of the dogs were seen off-leash. They congregate in packs in the three-acre area in the west, making that entire part of the park "feel unsafe". During my volunteer work I rarely see the park without dogs on the loose. The city Parks Department has a \$22 million budget, and in many instances, it is to maintain giant dog parks.
- Christie Peters commented in the newspaper what a great year the ACC had, with an 80% reduction in dogs euthanized over the past ten years. That is an amazing accomplishment, which clearly required a passionate approach. In the same article it was stated that "calls regarding off-leash dogs are considered bottom of the barrel" priority. Might as well just post signs at the parks that off-leash dogs are welcome.
- For four years I have tried to gain some passion from the ACC to do something to alleviate the off-leash problem at the city parks. One year we called the ACC 56 times when we saw 8 or more dogs off leash. Officers came into the park twice, and one of those times they suggested the violators should make the park a dog park! When the FOBF arranged for two additional ACC officers in 2020 to patrol the parks CP told the city council she did not need officers for that purpose. She told me at that meeting the "lucky dogs get to go to the park". If the off-leash problem is being weighed against dog cruelty the problem will never be addressed.

- The response to my requests for help patrolling the parks has always been that the ACC is understaffed. That issue has not stopped the results with saving dogs. If there was a passion for park safety we would not see the problem that we have today.

Possible actions to consider:

- Find someone at the ACC to be passionate about taking the parks back for citizens use
- Hire two ACC officers to police the parks and ticket offenders: 10 citations a week would bring in \$125,000 a year to cover the expense
- Institute flex scheduling at the ACC so parks and playgrounds can be made safe in the evening and on weekends
- On days with fewer calls have ACC officers patrolling parks between calls
- Track calls to ACC for the off-leash dogs and the time of day to determine when to patrol
- Create a park safety questionnaire to determine how safe the parks feel for patrons. Perhaps Friends Groups could be involved with canvassing their patrons.
- Friends Groups could collect off-leash data similar to what the FOBF team collects
- Use Bandy Field to test effects of patrolling as we have four years of base data
- Create a publicity campaign to “take back the Parks” using the tv and newspapers and Friends Groups
- Include the Park Rangers in patrolling as their schedule permits