

What can you do?

If you are a dog owner take responsibility for your dog. Be aware of the consequences and do not allow your dog to strip bark or chew trees. Make sure that you educate other dog owners about the consequences of this behaviour.

If you see a damaged tree please contact your local authority. London tree officer details can be found at www.ltoa.org.uk

It is an offense to allow your dog to damage a tree or any other piece of park furniture. If you witness the damage taking place please contact your local Safer Neighbourhood team. Contact details can be found on the MPS website www.met.police.uk

For further information please see the London Tree Officers Association best practice note which can be downloaded for free from the LTOA website at www.ltoa.org.uk



MAYOR OF LONDON

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Bark better than bite

Damage to trees by dogs



Damage caused to trees by dogs is increasing in the capital. One London borough estimates the damage caused to its own trees is in excess of £1 million¹.

Bark better than bite

A survey among London tree officers (LTOA 2009) showed that they were unanimous in recognising dog damage as a problem on the increase. This increase is linked with a steep rise in the numbers of dogs owned over recent years.

Damage is caused by a small percentage of dog owners allowing or encouraging their dogs to attack trees. It is also important to recognise that the vast majority of dog owners are responsible and do not allow their dogs to damage trees and some genuinely don't realise the damage caused.

Currently there is considerable focus on "status" or "weapon" dogs. Whilst these groups of dogs undoubtedly contribute towards this damage, it can be caused by all types of dogs and this leaflet does not differentiate between status and non status dogs.

Some problems caused by loss of trees

- Parks and green spaces without trees will have diminished character or sense of place.
- Parks with damaged or dead trees look run down, unsafe and unappealing (similar to the impact graffiti can have) and may mean visitors do not return.
- Lack of shade in hot weather to protect the skin from cancers caused by harmful ultra-violet radiation.
- Trees help to filter, absorb, and reduce pollutant gasses, including ozone, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide. Carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) is also absorbed by growing trees.
- Fewer trees mean fewer habitats for wildlife to live in.

¹ This figure of £1 million dog damage in one London borough was derived by working out the cumulative CAVAT value of the trees removed from dog damage over a 12 month period. The CAVAT system is the capital asset value for amenity trees, where the value of trees are expressed in monetary terms. For further information about CAVAT please see the LTOA website at www.ltoa.org.uk

How dogs can damage trees

Damage can occur to both newly planted and well established trees. Tree damage can take the form of bark stripping and branch chewing. Dog owners strengthen their dogs' jaws by encouraging them to hang from low branches and chew bark.

Bark stripping damages the living part of the trees just below the bark which frequently results in its death by cutting off the connection between root and crown. Branch chewing, just like bark stripping, creates wounds on the tree that leaves the tree open to decay and disease.

