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Dog Owners Antsy Over Animal Control Action

By *Sophie Braccini*



Signs at Rancho Laguna Park Photos Sophie Braccini

It's a dog's life for dog owners in Moraga. No dog parks, no authorized area to let your pooch run off all that energy and reconnect with furry friends, nowhere but two places: Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga before 9 am and 1 hour before dusk and on Donald Drive along Mulholland Ridge. So when Contra Costa County Animal Services came to Rancho Laguna and ticketed dog owners at 3:50 p.m. on a recent afternoon, some became distressed. On January 14th a large number of dog owners attended the Town Council meeting to express their concerns.

"This is the only safe place for me and my dog to come, have fun and socialize," said an older Moraga resident who made the effort to come down to the microphone with her walker; Luis Toledo, a 24-year resident of Moraga stated that he got a ticket from Animal Control and couldn't understand why the officers wouldn't listen to his explanations.

There might be some reasons for that. As you enter Rancho Laguna, the first prominent large white sign that can be seen reads "Dogs MUST be on leash and under control at all times 9 a.m. to 7 p.m." Further away in the bushes a brown sign reads, "Pets must be on leash and under control after 9 a.m. with the exception of being off leash 1 hour before dusk during standard time and after 7 p.m. during daylight savings time."

Therefore, dog owners interpreted the text as, "I can have my dog unleashed one hour before dusk," while CCCAS seems to interpret it as no dog unleashed between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. (at press time CCAS had not return our calls requesting clarification).

"The problem is that the old text is fuzzy," says Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, "when Animal Control gets to a Park they apply their rule, which is no animal off leash. If municipalities want something else they need to have a very clear rule."

The Council asked that the matter be resolved and Ingram said the topic was going to be heard by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its January meeting on the 20th. "We should have a simple and straight forward rule like "dogs can be off leash before 9 a.m. and after 4 p.m.," suggests the Director.

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