



Woburn Safari Park Visitor Dog Access Policy

Updated: July 2026

Visitor Dog Access Statement

Woburn Safari Park is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming experience for all visitors and recognises the important role assistance dogs play in enabling disabled people to access services independently. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments wherever reasonably practicable whilst maintaining the highest standards of animal welfare, biosecurity and public safety.

As a zoological collection, Woburn Safari Park cares for a diverse range of native and exotic species. The presence of a domestic dog may affect collection animals through its appearance, scent, movement or vocalisations; some species may perceive dogs as predators or competitors, potentially causing stress or changes in normal behaviour. Visiting dogs may also react unpredictably to unfamiliar animals and surroundings.

Biosecurity is equally important. Domestic dogs can carry infectious agents or parasites without showing obvious signs of illness, creating a potential route of disease transmission to susceptible collection animals. Equally, visiting dogs may encounter pathogens or parasites associated with animals, their environments or contaminated ground that would not ordinarily be present in public spaces. Vaccination, worming and recent-health information is therefore requested so that the Veterinary Team can assess and reduce risks to both the collection and the visiting dog.

For these reasons, visitor dog access requires careful management. Rather than applying a blanket approach, Woburn Safari Park considers each request individually, balancing accessibility with our responsibilities under the Zoo Licensing Act, the Equality Act 2010, animal welfare legislation and recognised zoo best practice.

Therefore this policy has been developed with reference to the Equality Act 2010, Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance, BIAZA guidance relating to assistance dogs within zoological collections, EAZA Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria, and the advice of Woburn Safari Park's Veterinary Team.

Woburn Safari Park Principles

Woburn Safari Park aims to ensure that:

- Support disabled visitors by making reasonable adjustments wherever practicable.
- Recognise that assistance dogs may be trained by recognised organisations or individually by their owner to perform tasks that mitigate the effects of a disability.
- Recognise that membership of Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK), or the use of a specific harness, jacket or identification booklet, is not a legal requirement and consider each request on its individual merits.
- Maintain the highest standards of animal welfare.
- Protect the health of both collection animals and visiting dogs through robust biosecurity measures.
- Ensure the safety of visitors, staff and animals.
- Apply a consistent, evidence-based approach across the Park.

Where competing priorities arise, Woburn Safari Park will always seek to find a reasonable solution that supports accessibility whilst ensuring that animal welfare and biosecurity are not compromised.

Animal Welfare and Biosecurity

Animal welfare remains the primary consideration when determining whether dogs can safely access particular areas of the Park.

Domestic dogs may influence the behaviour of collection animals through their appearance, scent or vocalisations. Individual species, and even individual animals, may respond differently depending upon their natural history, previous experiences and current welfare state. Equally, visiting dogs may be exposed to unfamiliar pathogens or environments associated with a zoological collection.

To minimise these risks, Woburn Safari Park adopts a precautionary approach based upon veterinary advice and recognised zoo best practice. Designated visitor routes, restricted areas and operational procedures have been developed to protect both the animal collection and visiting dogs whilst allowing appropriate access wherever reasonably practicable.

These arrangements are subject to ongoing review and may be amended where animal welfare, biosecurity or operational considerations require.

Veterinary Approval

To support the health of both the animal collection and visiting dogs, all requests for visitor dog access are considered before the date of the visit.

Visitors are required to submit a completed Dog Access Declaration together with documentary evidence confirming that their dog is up to date with routine vaccinations and worming treatment.

These documents are reviewed by Woburn Safari Park's Veterinary Team before approval is granted. This process ensures that biosecurity risks are appropriately considered and that suitable arrangements can be made in advance of the visit.

Approval is granted for the specific visit date confirmed by Woburn Safari Park and is not transferable. If the proposed date changes, the visitor must contact the Park and obtain further approval before attending. This allows the Park to consider planned animal management, veterinary work, events, maintenance and other operations that may affect which routes or areas can be accessed safely.

Operational Management

The operational management of visitor dog access is supported through a suite of controlled documents which are reviewed alongside this policy.

These include:

- Dog Access Declaration
- Dog Access Map

Together, the policy, declaration and map provide visitors and staff with clear guidance regarding approved areas, visitor responsibilities, veterinary requirements and operational procedures.

The Admissions Team, Veterinary Team and Animal Departments work collaboratively to ensure that approved visits are managed consistently and that any concerns relating to animal welfare, biosecurity or visitor safety can be addressed promptly.

Woburn Safari Park reserves the right to amend the permitted or restricted areas on the day, or to withdraw access or terminate a visit, where animal welfare, biosecurity, health and safety or operational concerns make this necessary.

Dogs Left in Vehicles

Visitors may choose to leave their dog in their vehicle while entering an area where dogs are not permitted. Where this is planned, the visitor must provide the vehicle registration number and a contact telephone number to the Leisure Duty Manager or Admissions Team so that they can be contacted promptly if concerns arise.

Dogs must never be left in a hot vehicle or in any conditions that may compromise their welfare. Visitors remain responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is safe, secure and appropriately ventilated, and for checking the dog regularly. If staff have concerns about an unattended dog's welfare or safety, the visitor will be contacted and may be required to return to the vehicle immediately. Woburn Safari Park may take further action where it considers an animal to be at risk.

Monitoring and Review

Visitor dog access arrangements are monitored as part of Woburn Safari Park's wider commitment to continuous improvement in animal welfare, accessibility and visitor experience.

Incidents, animal welfare observations, veterinary advice, changes in legislation and updates to BIAZA or EAZA guidance will be considered as part of the policy review process.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where significant changes to legislation, professional guidance or operational practices occur.

Associated Documents

- Dog Access Declaration
- Dog Access Map
- Equality Act 2010
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance
- BIAZA Guidance – Assistance Dogs in Zoos and Aquariums
- EAZA Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria