

Caring for the forest

How to enjoy and care for the New Forest National Park

Ponies, donkeys, cattle, pigs & sheep

For their safety and your own please leave the animals alone - although owned and cared for by local people called commoners, they are unpredictable and best treated as wild. Please don't feed or pet them; there is plenty of natural food and it's best that they don't come to rely on people's attention. They may look friendly but they can bite and kick, especially ponies with foals.

Dogs

The New Forest is great for dogs but to minimise disturbance to wildlife, livestock and other people, please keep your dogs close by you and visible at all times - if necessary use a lead. Pick up after your dog, especially around car parks, on paths and where people play or picnic.

Birds

To help ground-nesting birds rear their young safely, keep yourself, dogs and horses on the main tracks from the beginning of March to the end of July.

Litter

Your food and litter could harm the ponies and donkeys. Please take your litter home if bins are full.

Barbeques & fires

To reduce the risk of damaging wildfires, campfires are not allowed without the landowner's permission. Disposable BBQs are welcome at Bolderwood, Blackwater and Wilverley where stands and water are available. Raised non-disposable BBQs are allowed on the hard-standing areas of car parks, providing water is available. You can hire fixed stand party-sized BBQs from the Forestry Commission (call 0300 067 4601) and from Hampshire County Council at Lepe Country Park (hants.gov.uk/lepe or call 023 8089 9108 in advance).

Cycling

Cycling is allowed only on the waymarked tracks and other designated routes. When approaching people and animals, please call out a warning and pass slowly and wide. Try to leave gaps for overtaking vehicles and never ride more than two abreast. Keep to a safe speed, wear bright colours to be visible and always use lights in the dark.

Fungi

Please leave fungi for other people to enjoy. Fungi are essential to the New Forest's internationally protected ecosystem. Foray leaders must apply for permission for educational excursions from the Forestry Commission in advance. If you suspect or see commercial picking please call the Forestry Commission on 0300 067 4600.

Camping

There are 10 campsites in the New Forest, run by Camping in the Forest, as well as a number of private sites. Please note that camping in the wild and overnight parking is not allowed in the New Forest.

Horse riding

Horse riders have open access to the New Forest, but to reduce damage to the ground please use tracks when it's wet.

Ticks

Check your children, dog and yourself for ticks when you get back - they can lead to Lyme disease.

Driving

The speed limits on unfenced roads greatly reduce the number of accidents involving animals. Slow down and give walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and animals a wide berth. Be especially careful at night.

Parking

Please park only in designated car parks, not on a verge or in gateways. Lock your car, taking any valuables with you and leave Forestry Commission car parks by dusk.

Unidentified objects

Areas of the New Forest were used to test bombs in World War I and II. Please keep away from objects that might be dangerous and notify the police immediately on 999.

Working forest

Stay safe by obeying warning signs and keeping away from work sites and vehicles.

