

Dog Park Use in Christchurch and Potential Improvements

Kristina Carrick, CJ Lepper, Georgia Nelson, Patrick

Executive Summary

- What is the current use of dog parks and what changes can be made to benefit the community as a whole?
- There has never been a study of dog park usage in New Zealand and there is very limited literature worldwide relating to dog parks. Dog parks need to be maintained and they draw on cities financial resources. Therefore it is important to find out if they are being utilized by dog owners, and if the facilities and location of these parks are benefiting dog owners throughout the city of Christchurch. With the assistance of City Care this report aims to research and examine usage and adequacy of dog parks through the city of Christchurch.
- The main method in which we used to research dog parks was through a questionnaire which would give us qualitative and quantitative data. 81 questionnaires were completed at 3 different dog parks Styx mill, The Groynes and Victoria Park. Alongside questionnaires, data on dog ownership distribution across the city was collected and manipulated into a map.
- Key findings to come out of this research showed high usage of dog parks, especially on weekends and overall satisfaction with facilities, with The Groynes proving to be the most popular. Most dog owners drove to dog parks due to their peripheral location in the outer suburbs of the city. Key findings also included suggested improvement to facilities specifically; covered areas, more bins and better car parking facilities. Overall there is satisfaction with dog parks a more central dog parks was identified as being of great benefit, although this has limitations of available space and interaction with other recreational areas in the inner city.
- Major shortcomings/ limitations of this research relates to the proportion of questionnaires collected in each dog park, and the differing facilities in these parks. Alongside this GIS analysis would have provided a clearer map in relation to dog distribution across the city.
- Future research on the subject of dog parks should concentrate on the number of dog per suburb and how these compare to the current location of dog parks. More recent data needs to be collected on this and GIS map analysis would provide comprehensive examination of the ideal location of dog parks, and would highlight exact areas in need of more dog park facilities.

Introduction

The following report examines and discusses the use of dog parks in Christchurch and changes that possibly need to be made, an area of research in the academic world that is relatively under-studied, particularly so in New Zealand. The core research question of which

e current use of dog parks in Christchurch and

This question was

Review of Relevant Literature

There is very limited literature on research projects relating to dog parks, in New Zealand and worldwide. A study of such nature has never been undertaken, therefore the literature in which we reviewed provided illustrations of research methodologies as opposed to insight into what our results may look like or what has

The first authors in which we focused on were Emel (2002) and Wilbert (2009). These journal articles provided an overview of past research and a historical progression of the subject of animal geography. Wilbert (2009) was particularly useful as it was a comprehensive overview of zoogeography and went on to develop ideas of animals being considered in the urban space. It was from such readings that we further explored the concept of animals in the urban space, and how dogs fit into the urban environment. Overall both authors were able to clearly demonstrate and deepen our understanding of how the subject of

deeper cultural examination into how animals can be seen as a powerful symbol of place.

Secondly, research by Ioja et al (2011) in Romania showed important ideas on how dogs are perceived by owners and non owners in a public park setting. Valuable insights offered in this reading illustrate the diverse ways in which dogs can be viewed in public space, an important thing to note here is that they can at times be feared and similarly dog owners can feel segregated due to the presence of their dogs. Such ideas presented by Ioja were influential in our decision to visit Hagley Park as a site of research alongside The Groynes, Styx Mill and

format which we would endeavour to replicate when communicating dog ownership patterns throughout the Christchurch.

Finally, once we had examined current literature we were able to draw on ideas and methodologies of previous academics and formulate our own research methods, which would help answer our research question.

Methodology

Our primary method of collecting information to determine what the current use of dog parks in Christchurch is was through completing research in 3 different dog parks around the city; Victoria Park, The Groynes, and Styx Mill. We focussed on these parks because they all have large fenced areas for dogs to be off the leash which meant our data is all comparable.

At these dog parks we interviewed dog owners using a questionnaire consisting of 13

A second part of our method was to visit Hagley Park, a park that does not have a designated, fenced dog park area. We did this to 1) gain observations of if dog owners visited Hagley park with their dogs and if so how they used the park with regard to on or off the leash and 2) to informally interview park users, both with and without dogs to gauge whether they would be

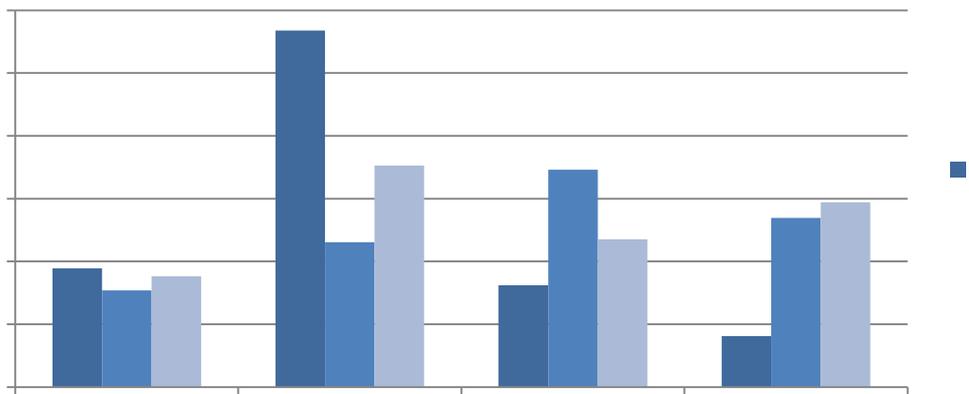
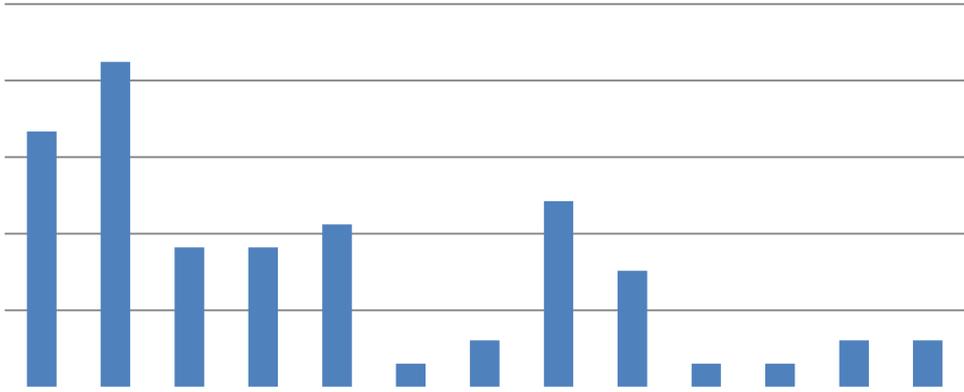


Figure 4. Age distribution of dog park users.

What we can see from our other results is that there is a large request for more space and activities for dogs. Many of the people surveyed said that the facilities here could be improved if there were water activities. Previously the small lake that was there was able to be used by the dogs but it has recentl



The conclusions we have arrived at are all relevant and applicable and we deem to be extremely reliable as they are direct results of our research which was conducted appropriately and professionally.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following people and organisations for their help and support with this research; Kerry Goddard our community partner from City Care, David Conradson group tutor from the University of Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council.

