

## Warning: Aggressive Dogs

Few counties hosting the trail have local ordinances requiring dogs to be leashed or fenced in. The Sheltopee Trace Association periodically receives reports of aggressive dog behavior on road-walk sections of the trail (e.g., between FarOut app milepoints 111.9 and 116.9 in Lee County). Hikers are advised to report aggressive dog locations on the FarOut app and take appropriate precautions. Safety measures provided to us include:

- **Stay Calm:** Dogs can sense fear and agitation. Try to remain calm and keep a steady, even pace. Avoid eye contact, which can be interpreted as a challenge by some dogs. Instead, try to avoid staring directly at the dog and keep your gaze soft and averted while slowly moving away.
- **Command Firmly:** In a confident and assertive tone, use simple commands like "sit" or "stay" to try to deter the dog. Some dogs may respond to authoritative commands if delivered with confidence.
- **Stand Still:** If a dog approaches you aggressively, stand still and do not run away as this can trigger the dog's prey drive and cause it to chase you. Back away slowly while noting the dog's position – do not let it get behind you. Try to maintain a safe distance until you can resume your hike.
- **Use a Repellent:** There are commercially available high frequency battery-operated ultrasonic dog repellents, small air blast horns, and dog/bear repellent sprays that can be used to deter aggressive dogs. The general cost is between \$10 and \$30. The sprays typically contain ingredients like capsaicin (used by the US Postal Service), which can discourage the dog without causing permanent harm.
- **Protect Yourself:** If the dog attacks despite your efforts to repel it, use whatever means necessary to protect yourself. This may include using your hiking poles, a large stick, or kicking or hitting the dog's sensitive areas.
- **If Bitten:** If you are bitten, call 911 to report the dog and your location to law enforcement. Take a photo of the dog if possible. Request that the dog be tested for rabies and request medical care if needed. Report the incident to the STA so we can follow up and warn other hikers.