One of the more frequent problems we encounter in managing community associations sadly is dog owners who do not clean up after their dog(s) or let their dogs run free off leash. Both condominium and homeowners association documents spell out provisions regarding pets typically in both the Use Restrictions in the Declaration and in the Rules & Regulations. Unfortunately many people choose not to familiarize themselves with their association’s documents. There are very few bad dogs, but more bad dog owners.

As having been the proud owner of two dogs (Casey, a male golden retriever; and Maxi, a female red toy poodle), I know from my personal relationship with them as well as from talking to other dog owners, that they are an important part of my life, like my children, and an important responsibility I enjoy and chose to take on. I also know that not everyone likes dogs, and some people even fear them perhaps because of some unpleasant animal experience they may have had in the past. While dogs give many people great pleasure and pride of ownership, others could care less about them.

My responsibility to them and my community included walking them on leash, cleaning up after them when they defecate, and making certain that they do not bark frequently constituting a nuisance to my neighbors. Doing otherwise violates my community’s deed restrictions and city and county ordinances.

When we'd go for our walks, I'd carry with me a one-gallon plastic zip-lock baggy with four paper towels inside. That enabled me to clean up after both of them, keep my hands clean, and zip the bag so no odor escaped when I dispose of it. Some people use “pooper scoopers”. Everyone has his or her own technique for dealing with this necessary chore.

I implore all of my fellow dog owners to please comply with community standards and local ordinances regarding their beloved pets. Common sense alone tells us we do not want to create a problem for the neighbors, just as we don’t want them to create unnecessary problems for us.

I look forward to fewer pet complaint calls. Please call me at my office at 481-4700 or on my cell phone at (239) 281-4701 if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about anything contained herein. I look forward to seeing you (and your pets) around the property.