

Dog Parks

Why They Are a Bad Idea



By: Ed Frawley



Leerburg Kennels

Foreword

When you view this eBook in PDF format. Click on **BOOKMARKS** on the top left side of your PDF reader, these bookmarks are eBook chapters.

[Leerburg® Kennel](#) and Video is owned by Ed Frawley.

Ed has owned German Shepherds (GSD) for over 45 years. Since 1978 he has bred over 350 litters of German working bloodline GSD's. His dogs work in law enforcement, as S&R dogs, as competition Schutzhund dogs, and as family companions and protectors.

Since 1980 Ed has produced over 120 dog training videos and DVDs. He was a police K-9 handler for 10 years, competed in several dog sports, including AKC obedience and Schutzhund. In addition he has built one of the top dog training supply businesses in the world.

If you go to the web site **Leerburg.com®** you will see that it has over 10,000 printed pages. The Leerburg® Web Discussion board has over 10,000 registered members_ and over 120,000 posts in the archives. Learn to use our site search function.

“Dog Parks” Why They Are a Bad Idea! “It’s Your Job to Protect Your Dog”

By Ed Frawley



[Here is a book that I recommend you read called Fatal Dog Attacks](#)

About once every couple of days I get an email from someone asking about problems with their dogs being attacked when they are on walks or running loose at one of the local parks that many cities setup.

People question me on how to deal with overly aggressive dogs that belong to other people and they question me about their own dogs not trying to defend themselves. Some people want to know if they should just let the dogs work out the problems themselves.

Ed Frawley's Philosophy of Dog Training



Article

I want to go on record as saying that the concept of "Dog Parks" was well intended but a bad idea, especially when dogs are allowed to run off-leash. I do not recommend people take their dogs to these places.

The average dog owner does not understand pack structure or how strong the pack instincts are in their pet. These drives click into high gear when a dog is taken into a park with other dogs. When new dogs come into parks look they are viewed not as visitors but as intruders into "the personal territory of the dogs who come there on a regular basis." This leads to territorial aggression.

When there is a group of dogs that are allowed to run together, they instinctively try to establish a rank order (or pecking order). If there are several dogs that want to assume a certain rank within the pack there are going to be problems. There is

always a good possibility that fights will develop to determine what order various dogs fall in.

With inexperienced dogs, or dogs that do not have strong temperaments there will be posturing going on before a fight begins. Many times owners can verbally control their dogs and warn them to back off. But all too often dogs that have fought before will launch into a full-fledged attack. These dogs have learned that a fast attack is often the best defense. In other words, they have learned to be good fighters.



You cannot assume that every dog in the park is a well-mannered, well-trained pet. Just because you see it playing with other dogs does not mean that it will play with your dog. The issue of rank has already been settled with these other dogs and the game may be going according to their rules. Your

dog will not know the rules and can easily get into trouble.

I get emails from people who are disappointed in their puppy or young dog because it shies away from other dogs and shows avoidance to other dogs they meet on walks or in parks.

The Theory of Corrections in Dog Training



Article

Most new owners don't understand that their dogs EXPECT THEM to be "their pack leader." In the wild the pack leader protects its pack. Your young dog instinctively expects you to protect it. When a handler does not protect his dog the dog is in conflict and loses confidence. If threatened before it is mature, these young dogs will show avoidance to strange dogs and strange situations. I am sure that what happens is that the pup learns that its owner is not going to step in and help, so it's on its own. This breaks down to a young dog becoming unsure in other situations. After all, if his best friend and pack leader will not protect him who will?

How to Break Up a Dog Fight without Getting Hurt



eBook

When you stop to think about it, normal people would not expect their young children to fight adults that were threatening them. So why do people expect their young dogs to show aggression to older dogs or even dogs of their own age? In most cases, the owners simply lack the understanding of pack drives and dog training. People get caught in the trap of thinking they have a German Shepherd from working police K-9 bloodlines and by God it should be tough!! Well, it doesn't work that way.

If new owners do everything right when their pup is young the dog can grow up to be a confident, strong protection dog if it has the genes to allow this to happen. But in the hands of the wrong person the same dog can grow up to be a basket case. This is one of the reasons I do not guarantee temperament in the pups I sell. Too many people out there lack common sense or the experience to properly train a dog.

Amish Leather Training Leashes



The best dog leashes in the world!

So when your dog is approached by a dog that looks like it may be aggressive you need to take the aggressors role. Verbally tell the dog in a deep voice to get out of there. If another dog attacks your dog you need to do what I explain in my article on [Breaking Up A Dog Fight](#). If I were to walk a dog in the city, I would not do it without a can of pepper gas to use on any dog that even looks cross-eyed at my puppy. I would not hesitate to physically go after a dog that approaches my pup. The only ones that would be allowed to come close would be dogs I know for a fact are well-mannered, friendly soles that will be tolerant and play with my puppy.



While some breeds are predisposed to fight more than others, every breed has its own bullies. There are too many people out there that don't come close to the label of being a "responsible pet owner." With the number of fighting breeds growing, the risks of taking your pet to one of these parks is not worth taking. Owners need to realize that once a puppy or adult has been attacked, it will become a dog aggressive animal itself. This only has to happen one time for a permanent temperament change to occur in some animals. Dog aggression is a real pain in the ass.

Dealing with the Dominant Dog



eBook

Finally, if your dog is a bully and is aggressive to other dogs, you need to explain to him that this is unacceptable behavior. Softer dogs can get the message with a simple verbal reprimand, while other dogs need to have serious corrections. These corrections can come from a prong collar, [a dominant dog collar](#) or in some cases a [remote collar](#). (One should only use a remote collar if they have had the proper training).

Dealing With Dominant and Aggressive Dogs

\$49.00 +s&h



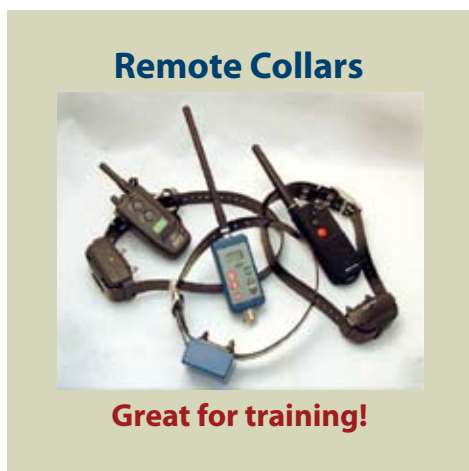
3 Hours 30 Minutes Long

The persistent dogs this correction needs to be so hard that the dog thinks its life is over. The correction needs to be so severe that the idea of fighting or showing aggression is not as strong as the fear of what happens when he does not mind. For these dogs the presence of another dog is a big distraction, but they need to understand that if they allow the distraction to take control the punishment will be swift and severe. Once they understand this simple concept they will become much better dogs because of it.

Giving a dog this kind of correction is not a pretty sight. Many people do not have the temperament to do it the right way. They simply cannot bring themselves to correct at an effective level. Dog fights are a serious business and these people have no business owning aggressive dogs.

If you have a dog that needs help with distraction training I would direct you to my training video on [Basic Dog Obedience](#). This tape will guide you through these problems. It will explain the principles of correction and reading a dog's temperament to determine what level of correction to use.

If you have a dominant dog I recommend my DVD Dealing with [Dominant and Aggressive Dog](#)



Recommendations to make dog parks safer places:

While I am lucky to live in a small community and have acreage to exercise and train, I know that others that live in large cities don't have an option to where they can go with their dogs. The following information is designed to help people make dog parks a safer place.

1- Dogs should pass a test before being allowed in a dog park

In my opinion communities should establish and set up tests that pet owners must pass before dogs are allowed off leash into these dog parks.

The tests should demonstrate the off leash control owners have over their dogs while the dogs are faced with extreme distraction. In other words, the owners need to be able to call their dogs back away from a group of several dogs that are playing.

Dogs that can pass these tests should not be allowed off leash in the parks.

These tests should include knowledge of how to deal with dog fights.

2- There should be parks for small dogs and parks for large dogs

Allowing very small dogs to run with large dogs can be a very dangerous situation for the small dog. The average pet owner has no idea how to

break up a dog fight. They also can't comprehend how quickly a large dog can kill or seriously injure a small dog.

3- Be a responsible handler

- There are some basic common sense rules that good owners should follow when they use a park.
- When at the park and a dangerous or out of control dog shows up, leave the park. While you may feel you have the right to be there you gain nothing by pushing your limit and risking a dog fight.
- Go to the park at off-peak hours. You will learn when the quiet times are, those are the times to be there with your dog. If you dress for the wind and rain there is nothing wrong with having the entire park to yourself.
- When a dog pile or dog fight occurs, immediately call your dog away from the pack. There is nothing wrong with using a remote collar and practice calling your dog away from chasing a group of dogs.
- There is nothing wrong with teaching your dog that you are more fun than other dogs at the dog park. When you go, play the games your dog loves away from the dog pack.

- When your dog is off leash at the park, 100% of your of your focus should be on your dog.
- If you wish to socialize with other dog owners that fine, just do it when you have your dog on a leash.
- Don't make the dog park it's only out of the home experience with you. Take it for walks, take it swimming (when possible) play or train in different locations. People who only take their dog to a dog park set themselves up for dogs to get out of control. The dogs with a lot of energy who only go to the dog park can take the attitude of USE IT OR LOOSE IT which means they can get wild.
- In my opinion people should learn how to use a remote collar. Collars are invisible leashes. They should study my low level stimulation training and understand when they can and cannot use a collar in a dog park. (don't use a collar in the middle of a dog fight - the dog will think that his opponent is causing the stimulation and fight harder)

Remote Collar Pet Training

\$40.00 +s&h



2 Hours 45 Minutes Long





**Notice the ball in the one dog's mouth -
allowing only one dog to have a toy will often
trigger a dog attack.**

Emails

Emails on DOG PARKS - 2 Dead Dogs

Ed -

Just wanted to write and say, “Thank you!” for your website. I adopted a male GSD about a year ago and am consistently faced with changing behavioral issues. I am doing a thorough read and search of your site to assist me in resolving MY issues. I hope I never end up on one of your stupid questions lists! Although, I find them very entertaining.

I have had HORRIBLE experiences at the local dog park, and have since quit going. So, I found the article about dog parks particularly funny. I even had a fight with my city because they would not allow me to have my dog on a leash in the park. They ARE THE DUMBEST DOG PEOPLE EVER! By the way two dogs to date have been KILLED at my local dog park (these are the ones I am aware of at least!)

I don't have a question today, just wanted to give you thanks and praise. I am hoping to be able to locate the answers to my questions on your website - but, due to the wealth of information, it is taking some time to wade through it all.

Thank You,

Julie Gatlin

Plano, TX

Muzzles



Learn how to measure for your dog and pick the right muzzle.

I've seen a few fights, but none resulted in serious injuries as most owners have enough sense to call their dogs to them when a scuffle breaks out. I did witness a few owners and their dogs get banned from the park due to sheer idiocy. One woman (she fit the stereotype for "redneck trailer trash" to a T) brought with her a very dominant, poorly trained unneutered pit bull mix. At the time the park had about 15-20 dogs running around, mostly Boxers and Golden Retrievers (for some strange reason, about 8 Boxers.). This woman had taken the collar off of her dog instead of just unsnapping the leash and had wandered off to the opposite end of the park to talk to this group of people. Her dog was terrorizing smaller dogs and chasing them, nipping at them, and becoming a nuisance by challenging any other dog at the park. It wasn't until the dog began harassing a Boxer puppy (between 5-7

months old) that anyone really stepped in to stop this dog. It had begun chasing the puppy, which was obviously distressed and began yelping, which only egged the pit mix on. The pit was nipping at this puppy's back legs, knocking him over, and trying to tug at the skin of the dog's neck. The Boxer's owner was able to grab his dog, hoist the yelping puppy over his shoulder, and it still wasn't enough to deter this pit mix. The pit began LEAPING at this man's shoulder and chest, eyes locked on the guy's puppy, and each time the man would scream and kick the dog off it would just run and take another flying leap at the man's dog. This guy was a good 6-foot something and with the Boxer over his shoulder he still managed to keep his pup safe, but by this time SEVERAL owners were trying to shoo the pit mix away and grab a hold of it to control it, the entire time screaming "Whose dog is this? Get your dog off of me, call your dog, someone get this dog out of here!" After about 2 minutes of this dog leaping and biting at the puppy/owner the redneck woman walked over to the commotion and tried to call her dog over, which of course was almost useless. By the time she caught the dog she had to be straddling it and holding its neck since she couldn't manage to get its collar on correctly, and finally the dog park owner was able to edge through everyone and humiliate her in front of the crowd. He told her that she was not welcome back at the park again and that she was irresponsible for bringing her obviously aggressive dog in, which park rules

forbid, and went on about the lack of control she had over the dog and the fact that she wasn't even supervising the dog because she was across the park. All I heard her say was something about, "He's never done that before! He just wanted to play with the puppy! He's not mean, you're being unreasonable my dog wouldn't do that." As she was walking out the other owners were cheering and laughing, I was quite amused. Thankfully for me, at the time I had taken my old dog Shadow and she was sitting by my side in the back of the park the entire time this occurred.

Aside from that one distinct incident, most fights are due to stupid owners bringing their small dogs into the big dog section of the park (JRTs, toy poodles, Fox terriers, Dachshunds, etc) and then arguing with big dog owners when their dogs are chased into their arms, yelping and screaming, because the larger dogs would terrorize them (or just try to sniff and greet, which often was enough to frighten the tiny dog). The argument usually ends with the small dog owner leaving because they didn't agree with using the small dog park area since "there aren't as many dogs in there for my dog to play with."

I'm fairly grateful that I'm able to go at times where there might be one or two other dogs, but the amount of idiots that come to the park is astounding. So many unaltered animals run around and many times people bring their pets that have

lived in their back yard and with their family for years without ever socializing with other animals, so these people assume their dog is totally fine since it loves people and it might get along with, say, their in-law's Labrador or something. These are often the ones that wonder why their dog is biting at all the other dogs or sitting behind their legs growling at anything that approaches. I've even had some odd instances where I'd be taking photos somewhere in the park and I've had dogs stand about 5 or 10 feet from me and just bark. I assume they don't like my camera, as it can be a bit noisy, but I don't always feel very safe. I once was sitting at a picnic bench and this woman's Great Dane walked about 15 feet from my seat and stared at me for about 5 minutes. I kept taking shots until the dog began barking furiously, which surprised me into nearly falling out of my seat since I hadn't been paying attention. The owners kept calling their dog back but this thing would not stop walking near my bench, staring at me, growling, and barking. Needless to say, I beat a hasty retreat along the perimeter of the fence and left before that dog decided I was more of a threat than it felt at that moment. I love big dogs, I adore Danes, but this dog was NOT happy with my presence.

I know you don't take your dogs to those parks, but have you heard of any local instances of dog fights at one of them?

Jinn / Sabarika



Comment on Dog Parks:

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for your web site advice. My beloved, very friendly dog was attacked in a park this past weekend. I was so upset with the owners of the dog, because their dog was so aggressive and yet not leashed. (I am sure this dog has had “run -inn’s in the past) Oddly enough, the owner was bit and my dog was left unharmed as your advice mentioned.

I told so many people of my ordeal and yet nobody seemed to know what they would have done either. Thank you so much for the proper advice.

My husband & I live in nearby West Bend, and are glad to know you are so close if we need you expertise.

Sincerely,
Michelle Nast



I refuse to take my dogs to any dog park and your article pretty much hit all the reasons why I don't.

But since humans are social animals, one of the biggest problems I've seen has its roots in a well-established group of owners who meet at the same time. I have likened these groups as junior high school cliques.

These cliques are aware that some of the dogs present will cow or attack a new dog at the park and they allow this to happen. If the owner of the new dog should protect their pet in any way, shape or form, they threaten the new person. Humans are predators as well and I've seen them pack up on new people (or myself when I got upset when my elderly golden was attacked).

My vet, when we were discussing the bad dynamics of dog parks social structure and safety, mentioned that there are people who know their dog is aggressive and enjoy bringing their dog to designated dog parks to see them attack other dogs. I've seen owners of large, powerful, protection dogs (young men with GSDs are the worst, followed by young men with Dobermans and Rottweilers) actually introduce their dog to the largest protection dog they encounter and try to initiate or prolong a fight. When their dogs attack mine, I tell them to get their dog off of mine. I have been threatened with physical violence. I tell them I have pepper spray (and not just one of those lipstick canisters, but a size for more than a few really good shots to use on the problem dog AND their owner) that I will use on them as well as their dog.

My present golden retriever when she only weighed 35-40 pounds was attacked by a GSD (9 months old & 95 pounds). The dog was trying to grab her by the nape of the neck to shake her like a squirrel - the owners told me he was just a puppy and playing. My dog was screaming in fear and I kept on trying to get on top of her using my entire body as this dog was relentless. In trying to get my dog under my torso it bit my shoulder, arm, and elbow. Nobody helped me at all. Finally I shouted (and used very crude swear words) that if that dog was not controlled immediately I would do it myself. And this is the typical escalation of

conflict at these dog parks. (BTW, my golden is fearful of strange dogs now - so I take her trail running and avoid other people and their dogs - she is much happier getting the exercise and chasing squirrels than the nonsense of a dog park). I started swearing at the people who told me their dog was just playing and the dogs should work it out. I told them that they are not going to work it out on my dog and that I would get their license plate numbers if my dog should be injured because I will sue. I was told to leave this public dog park or that "they would make me." These idiots don't seem to realize that even making threats is simple assault, and when I tell them I will call the police for these threats they look stunned - apparently it doesn't occur to them that they are breaking the law.

My perspective of dog parks is very negative. I've seen people standing around in conversation and not monitoring the activity of their dogs. I've seen dog walkers bring up to 10-12 dogs over which they have no control. I've seen truly clueless people who may or may not have a dog come to the park with children as young as 3-4 years and allow their kids to commingle with a swirling mass of dogs.

Thank you for your frankness. I really appreciate someone who understands pack behavior and clearly states what is really going on with owners and their dogs.

Debbie

Basic Dog Obedience

\$40.00 +s&h



4 Hours Long

Question on Dog Parks

Mr. Frawley,

Please help, I am desperate. Three months ago, we found Eli in the park. The vet believes he is about one year old. He is aggressive towards other dogs and chews everything that can fit into his mouth. Last night, in training class, Eli bit another dog and would not let go. The dog received stitches and my husband received a nice wound as well. On walks Eli is aggressive towards other dogs and tries to go after them. We have a lab collie mix who is 6 years old and much smaller. I want to begin a family soon. I am worried, can this behavior be stopped? Is it too aggressive? The trainer did not give any suggestions and I don't know what to do. I don't want Eli to hurt our other dog much less anyone else.

Thank you for your time.
Angelle

Answer on Dog Parks:

Read the articles on my web site about [Dealing with Aggressive Dogs](#). Also read [the Q&A sections](#). This can be cured with proper obedience training. I would recommend that you get a [prong collar](#) and my [Basic Dog Obedience video](#).

Correcting this is going to require strong training with very severe corrections, the dog must respect the pack leader and fear the results of not minding more than its interest in fighting.

The reason your dog is aggressive is because it was a stray and had been attacked itself as a stray.

Some people do not have the temperament to correct hard enough to stop this behavior - those people need to find a new home for their dog.



**Establishing Pack Structure
with the Family Pet**

\$40.00 +s&h

4 Hours Long

LEERBURG
VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Establishing Pack Structure
with the Family Pet

Prong Collar



Great for training!

Question on Dog Parks:

Hello,

I was exploring your sight and I had a question; I am the owner of a 4.5 month old Australian Shepherd/ lab mix. My trainer suggested that I socialize him to as many people and other animals as I am able. When I first adopted Jake, I found him difficult to manage. He was teething badly, and tended to nip at me in a somewhat aggressive manner. Jake has a very dominate personality. He is very confident, does not startle easily (at all!), and he is very alert. The first few weeks of ownership felt like a constant battle to gain leadership, and he often outsmarted me. I have been taking Jake to a local dog park several times a week for the last three weeks. He is very friendly with all the dogs and the humans as well. At the

park he often wrestles with the adult dogs. One in particular dog tries to get Jake into the submissive posture. Unless he is tired, Jake energetically resists. These wrestling matches are not accompanied by growling or barking and the dogs will often stop, share a drink at the same water fountain and then start up again. I often intervene and have Jake sit for a while and rest, as he has a tendency of playing himself to exhaustion. Also, I have also noticed that Jake adjusts his play style to match the dog that he is playing with. If the other dog doesn't want to wrestle, they will play chase, or fetch together. I have seem him wrestle down a dog three times his size, and then turn around and gently nuzzle a poodle half his size.

If I understood you correctly, you stated that dog parks may be detrimental to the bond between owner and companion. My experience has been just the opposite. Jake is much calmer, more affectionate and responsive to me. He seems more "in tune" with me, and he looks forward to his trips to the park so much so that he runs to the car almost every time I let him out in the yard. I was interested in your opinion on this. Am I inadvertently harming my dog? And how can this be when all the changes I have seen are positive ones?

I thank you for your time, and I hope to hear back from you soon.

Mary Travers



Answer on Dog Parks:

You totally misunderstood what I wrote in my article on DOG PARKS. I never said or even implied that taking a dog to the dog park would hurt the relationship with the dog and handler. What you risk every single time that you take your dog there is that your dog will be attacked by a dog aggressive dog. If that happens you will have a dog fighter for the rest of your life.

[Read my article on animal aggression.](#)

You would be much wiser to spend the same amount of time training your dog in obedience. The one on one time spent in training will have far better results than the time your dog spends wrestling with other dogs. If you want exercise

– take your dog swimming, play Frisbee, ball with him. Time spent with the owner is 59 times better than time spent with other dogs.

If you would like to learn more about the principles of obedience training a dog, read the description for my Basic Dog Obedience video. You will probably find that you have not had the full picture on the steps of training a dog must go through before it can be considered fully trained. You can also read why I am not a fan of taking an untrained dog to obedience classes.

Get a prong collar and train your dog. If you were working with a dog trainer that knew what he or she was talking about they would have already told you these things.

How to Fit a Prong Collar



eBook



Testimonial on Dog Parks:

Mr. Frawley,

I have been reading some of your articles with great interest, especially ones that talk about dogs and their pack instincts. While reading your article about dog parks something came to my mind that I wanted to ask your advice on.

Where I live we have plenty of dogs and businesses that cater to their needs. I think that responsible dog walkers provide a wonderful service and can be a great asset to some of the dog owners. I do however have a huge problem with pack walkers. These people are super irresponsible and I don't think they even realize the sort of dangers that can be associated with what they do.

I am talking about dog walkers who are trying to maximize their profits and will walk as many as 15 dogs at once!!! (Yes, that's one person walking all these dogs together and I am not talking about Chihuahuas!).

I have seen them on city streets and in parks. The dogs they walk are in danger of injury, any other dogs or people they meet are in danger, not to mention these people never pick up the piles of poop their dog herds drop as they walk.

I want to write a letter to the city news paper with hopes that something will be done about this. I'm not hoping for any sort of legislation, but at least by educating the public and consumers this sort of practice will cease.

I am writing to you with the hopes that you would be so kind as to help me to write such an article or point me towards articles describing similar scenarios. I am not knowledgeable enough about the dynamics of a pack of dogs to be able to write a powerful enough article on this topic. I can write about some of the other nuisances and risks associated with pack walking.

How many dogs do you think is the most one person should be in charge of? Our city by-law limits the number of dogs per house hold to 3. I thought this might be a reasonable number of dogs for a dog walker to be in charge of as well.

I would really appreciate any sort of suggestions or help you may be able to offer me.

Looking forward to your reply,
Marta

Dominant Dog Collar



Every Dominant Dog needs this collar for training

Testimonial on Dog Parks:

I took my 2 year old Great Dane to the dog park a few days ago. Same park we've been going to for the past year, no problems. Well, an unneutered male dog came up to him and started growling at him. I forget the breed, but something like a Chiva, Silva, something. Little brown dog, seventy pounds or so. Well, my Dane obviously felt provoked and growled back. Duh! Fight ensued, the other dog ended up with three puncture wounds. One 1 1/2" deep, and so I encouraged the owner to take their dog to the vet. They resisted at first, but I insisted. I spoke with the owner and gave her my information to pay their entire bill, as

my Dane had never bitten another dog (or anything for that matter) ever before.

A day later I got a call from her husband, irate as all get-go. I finally calmed him down and explained that I did everything in my power to break up the fight (yes, I know how to pull them apart from behind) but they ran off. I am sure they reported me anyway, because I got a nasty-gram from the city today, and so I decided to research my liabilities. Well, after reading various articles and opinions, many on your site, I've decided it's smarter to keep my puppies at home, safe, and away from the un-neutered male dogs of the world. Poco has been attacked 5 times now, and I realize what you say is true - he's learning to be a fighter. I don't want that!

When I send them the money for the bill, I am also going to send them a link to your web site so maybe they can realize the same thing I have. Dog parks are NOT safe.

Thanks for waking me up and helping me (hopefully) avoid future problems.



Testimonial on Dog Parks:

I recently took my six-month old Jack Russell Terrier to an unleash dog park here in Southern California. Unfortunately the dog park is self-governed and has only been divided into large and small dogs with no posted regulations. My dog had been there numerous times without incident, but the other day she went to investigate a very small older T-cup Chihuahua who bit her on the nose. My dog was trying to establish the pack order when the owner jerked her dog away from mine, but she was still attached. The small dog only weighed 3 1/2 pounds and was seven years old. The dog passed away five days later. As a pet owner I felt horrible and I went immediately to the emergency pet hospital and told them I would be happy to pay for half the bill.

All this has not been enough I am now being sued, and told they are going to have a motion to order that my little dog be put down since she is aggressive.

Since that time I have read several articles on the definition of inter-dog aggression and all three exclude example of aggression when the dog is provoked, such as being bitten first.

Question on Dog Parks:

Over the weekend a dog was killed by two pit bulls at a local dog park. I had coincidentally seen these two pit bulls at a dog park near my home which I had gone to “check out” (I personally have never taken my dogs to a dog park after my Doberman was attacked and almost died 7 years ago) only a few days before the killing.

I have spent the last several days at this park warning other dog owners of these two dogs in particular and other general precautions they should adhere to should they choose to be in a dog park. The stuff I have heard and seen has frightened me to the core of my being. People with toddlers loose among a group of dogs, misinterpretation of dog behavior, obvious bullying and dominating labeled “oh he just wants to play”, rapid escalation of other dogs joining a dominating dog....people are not educated on what is appropriate behavior. I have been scouring

the internet to compile any type of informational material that I can gather to educate these dog owners about

- 1) When is my dog being bullied?
- 2) When is my dog being a bully?
- 3) What are acceptable behaviors and what is going to lead to trouble?

Can you direct me to any material in particular that would help? I would like to be able to arm people with knowledge: signs they should look for and dispel some of the myths...

Thanks!

Ed's Comment on Dog Parks:

The solution is to not visit dog parks. Dogs are pack animals - there is NO REASON on earth to be exposing your dog to strange dogs outside of his pack. You bring problems on yourself by doing this. Not only is this concept of dog parks dangerous for your dog - it is dangerous for people who find themselves in a position to have to break up dog fights.

[Read the article I wrote on HOW TO BREAK UP A DOG FIGHT WITHOUT GETTING BIT.](#)

Hi-

Your site is great and I am looking for your opinion about my 14 month old dog Maisie. She

is an Australian Shepherd mix (picture @ 8 mos. attached). We got her at a pet adoption day when she was 8 mos. old. She was spayed. Her previous owner was a college student who couldn't care for the dog.

The dog quickly adjusted to living with us and has been nothing but affectionate (very) to me and my wife.

After a few months went by, she began barking at people approaching the house, which was OK with me at that time. I didn't reward or punish. Since I travel, I thought it would be nice to have the dog make some noise if a stranger approaches the house while my wife is home alone. However, this problem is getting out of hand. She now is going crazy when the doorbell rings and will not calm down. We have put her in her crate and she makes so much noise, that we have to move her to a back room when guests are here.

We want to get her used to guests, so a little after guests arrive, we will bring her out on a leash to sniff the guests and get to know them. Both times we did that, she jumped at the guests (I yanked her back on the leash and yelled at her) and she was removed to the back room for the remainder of the visit. This behavior was once limited to our house, but now she is beginning to do similar things outside of the house.

We have always taken her to dog parks to play with other dogs and people and her behavior there

has generally been good. If she has ever gotten into a scuffle, I have pulled her away reprimanded her and forcefully walked her away on her leash. The last two times at the dog park, she aggressively attacked small white dogs (unprovoked). Both times, I have verbally reprimanded her and shaken her on her leash. Since, it happened a second time, I doubt it is having an effect.

Lastly, she has begun to growl and lunge at people outside of our home (in the pet store and on a farm where I work). I never let her go unleashed outside of the dog park or our backyard for fear that she will attack a dog or a person.

Can this problem be treated or is it too late? I feel that this problem is new. She has basic obedience training, and will follow basic commands but does not pay attention in high distraction situations.

Your advice would be appreciated.

Brian
Florida

Remote Collars



Great for training!

Dog Fights in Dog Parks

I have a 5 year old female pit mix. She is very loveable and friendly-especially to people. Everyone that comes into contact with her says that she is just the sweetest dog. Very affectionate.

About a week ago, we went to the dog park that we always go to. There were the usual 5 dogs that go there that she runs around with-but there was one dog that I haven't seen there before. She was running around with them having a blast. Then all of a sudden, a fight broke out between my dog and the other dog-who is not aggressive at all. It sounded terrible. I didn't know what to do-so I stood clear to let them fight-didn't want to get in the middle. My dog was very aggressive-she kept going after the other dog. The owner of the other dog tried to break it up and got badly bit. The two dogs eventually were separated and I left as soon as I can. Ever since the fight-my dog has been acting funny. Very timid, and scared, which is very unlike her. She's usually very happy.

I have a few concerns:

- Why is my dog acting weird-should I be worried about my own safety-she's never tried to attack me.
- Since the owner of the other dog got bit-can he do anything to me-legally?

I just don't know where to go from here. I definitely will not go to that park, or any other park. She will be on a leash at all times. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much,
Sarah Q.

I'd also like to say, upon re-reading your article, that I do appreciate it. I enjoy going to my local dog park because I am friends with several trainers and owners that frequent it (whose dogs are very well under their control) but each time I go I bring a first-aid kit for my dog. I go less and less frequently any more because I'm seeing more and more un-neutered and un-spayed dogs running around, especially those who are mixes of dog-aggressive prone breeds. I have absolutely no problems with such breeds, but it worries me because of certain incidents I have witnessed. One such incident was a very large un-neutered adult "pit bull" mix type dog--looked to be an AmStaff cross. There were perhaps 6 to 8 Boxers in the park that day with two being pups looking about 4 to 6 months. This pit-type dog became very dominant with one of the smaller puppies and began to rough it up by knocking it over and chasing it. Several owners noticed this behavior becoming quite dangerous and leading to aggression so the Boxer pup's owner (a man of about 6') took his pup and began to walk away. Nobody could

locate the pit's owner since they were nowhere in immediate sight. I watched (and I'm upset I didn't take photos of this) as the pit turned around and continued after the Boxer as it was being led by the harness with its owner. The owner finally picked the pup up (after it began yelping and further provoking this pit's nips and excited barks) and the pit didn't stop there--it began to leap (several feet off the ground) and snap at the pup as the man carried it. The aggression ensued as owners began congregating to find a way to keep this dog away because it had no collars on whatsoever and was wriggling past everyone to take giant running leaps at the Boxer--who was now hoisted over the man's shoulder. The man was physically pushing and shoving this aggressive dog away from him because it was jumping about as high as his chest and laughing itself off of other dogs and people to get to the Boxer puppy. The owner was finally located (she was quite unfit to be an owner--very skinny white trash-type woman with an attitude and obviously very little dog education) and was yelled at by several owners to keep an eye on her dog and to keep an obviously dog-aggressive animal out of the park. The dog obviously didn't listen to her because it took several minutes to be caught and she put a chain collar on it, the entire time babbling about how her dog "just wants to play" and "isn't mean at all". The owner of the dog park had arrived at this time and demanded that she leave the park and was not welcome back, as far as I had heard this was not an isolated incident

involving her and her dog. Since then I've been very cautious about when I bring my dog in (~9 month-old husky/aussie cross) and how long I stay. It proves the point that dog parks are not safe for many reasons and it's almost like playing roulette with your pup--you don't know what dog is going to trigger an attack and it's go at your own risk.

Jinn Schmitz



Problems in Dog Park:

Ed,
I am the owner of a Doberman with a very even temperament...but when provoked he will fight back. We go to a dog park and he plays and walks with other dogs. This week a neutered

Cane Corso after walking with him decided to hump him once we were done with the walk. The owner did nothing to pull his dog off of my dog. My dog freaked out and they got in a fight, no blood was shed, but the owner of the dog that did the humping started a big uproar and emailing members that he considered my dog a dangerous dog (Dobe) and pulled people on his bandwagon. I think people should control their dogs so that they are not humping other dogs at the park. Others say that is normal behavior. I cannot seem to convince half of the people that it is inappropriate park behavior. What do you think? Is the dobe a dangerous dog for protecting himself? Is the Cane Corso the start of the fight because of the humping behavior? Thank you.

Karin

Ed's Answer to Problem in Dog Parks

This is an example of why you should not be going to Dog Parks. They are a bad idea conceived by nice people.

The fact that the Dobe acted appropriately is beside the fact. What should have happened was the owner of the Can should have stopped this behavior, when that did not happen the Dobe owner should have stopped the behavior. Neither of these things happened so the Dobe had to deal with it.

People who do not understand pack behavior go

to dog parks. People who do not understand pack behavior create pack behavior problems by not being pack leaders. When that happens bad things happen.

The solution is to not go to dog parks because they are filled with uneducated dog owners with untrained dogs.



DOG KILLED AT DOG PARK

I originally found your site about 6 years ago. At the time, I was just starting to get into breeding GSDs, and was amazed at the sheer volume of information, tips, and common sense on your site. I was just on it today, and was reading your dog park article. There is one thing that you failed to

mention in your article. When you have dog sitters, you **MUST ALWAYS**, and I mean **ALWAYS** make it crystal clear that they are not to take your dogs to dog parks. I was out of town for a few weeks, and a friend was keeping a few of my dogs at her place (the ones I could not take with me) I had a beautiful red sable 10 month old male out of Slovakian and dr working lines.

Voodoo was not aggressive towards other dogs, usually, but Rachel took him, Chaos, and Bella to a local dog park. Voodoo was instantly attacked, and killed. I have never taken any of my dogs to dog parks, and was totally shocked that that was allowed to happen. The park was supervised, but the staff was busy elsewhere. Bella and Chaos brought parvo home that they obviously got at the dog park. I called the park office, and they told me that over 100 dogs had become sick with parvo after they, or other household dogs had visited.

Needless to say, I lost 2 litters, in addition to my 10 month old male. That park is in the middle of a class action lawsuit from several of the dog owners.

Thank your for your interest in our German Shepherd Dogs
Kaliber Kennels

Ed's Answer to a Dog Attack at a Dog Park:

You should sue the people who run this park!

Electric Collars



Great for training!

A comment from a Dog Park Supporter:

Ed:

How do you allow people to post crazy unsubstantiated reports like this that make no sense?

If there was a dog park in North America that had incurred 2 cases of parvo virus that news would be getting headlines in every major newspaper in the country.

If you had an ounce of sense in your head you should have been able to figure that out for yourself.

Instead of posting every single unsubstantiated story that comes to your attention, why don't you

spend about 10 % of your free time getting some details about the stories you post??

Your website is a f#\$%@ing embarrassment and I have ZERO respect for you or any of your opinions.

Please THINK before repeating rumors that make no sense.

If you ever get any legitimate INFORMATION about a dogpark fatality please either post the information to my group or at least ask the sender why they did not contact a newspaper about the incident.

Regards,

Bill Zardus

WRZ

Camden County, NJ

ccdogpark@hotmail.com

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Dogpark-National-News/>

Ed's Comments:

Bill

We are going to have to agree to disagree. We also have similar opinions of one another.

Ed

An Email from a person who manages the park in question:

I would like to address two issues regarding the post made by Julie Gatlin regarding 2 dogs being killed at the Plano Dog Park. This is not true. Our park has a section for big dogs and a section for little dogs. Signs are posted stating such. A person brought her little dog into the big dog area and was asked to go to the small dog area by members of the Plano Dog Park Association. She refused. Her little dog started running in the park and a Greyhound started chasing her dog and got to it. The small dog later died as a result of the injuries. This is the only incident regarding a death as a result of being at the Dog Park.

As for the comments regarding her dog being on leash inside the park, what is the purpose of having your dog ON leash inside an off leash park? We have signs posted at the entrances to the park, stating ALL DOGS MUST BE OFF LEASH INSIDE THE PARK. Why did Ms. Gatlin not follow the posted rules?

As for the city being dumb, we researched dog parks across the United States and Canada for years and found that the #1 issue is that all dogs MUST be off leash because if one dog is on leash inside the park, aggression may occur.

I encourage you to post the truth regarding Ms. Gatlin's post.

Thank you.
Debbie New [Debbien@plano.gov]

Ed's Comments on the dog park where a small dog was killed:

And your email is supposed to make this right?
Your lack of understanding and ignorance about dog behavior seeps from your email like a festering wound.

Ed

Bill's obviously gone on TILT:

Ed:

You have no idea what the hell you are talking about!!

Debbie is 100% correct and you are an idiot.
I can't emphasize that enough.

When someone contacts you with dog park questions please refer them to someone with some real knowledge and stop posting anonymous ravings that couldn't possibly be true!

If you had half a brain you'd be dangerous.

Don't bother taking those ridiculous messages down from your website now.

I'm posting something about you and your crazy ideas to my group today so other people can have a good laugh.

All I need to know is where you are located so I can warn local dog owners of your stupidity.

Regards

Bill Zardus



Dog Attacked in dog Parks:

Hi Ed,

I have a 1 year old boxer. He is not very dominant, has never initiated a fight, and does not really know what to do when another dog goes after him. In fact, he always backs down if a dog puts him in his place when he's getting annoying.

Just recently, there have been quite a few dogs that attack him out of the blue. I know that you are not a fan of dog parks, but when I took him there earlier today, one dog was hardly through the gate and viciously went after my dog and bit his leg. It scared me to death. That dog was immediately removed and another dog came in no more than 10 seconds later.

I was consoling my dog and checking him for bite marks, when another dog came in, sniffed him, and immediately went after him. Luckily, the owner and I were right next to them and were able to separate them right away. Both owners said that their dogs had never gone after a dog for no reason like that.

Like I said, my boxer has never started a fight. I would hate to stop taking him to parks because he loves to play with other dogs so much and I hate the idea of not letting him run off the leash since we just recently moved to the city and he is so used to running freely.

He is not neutered. Could dogs sense the increased testosterone and feel threatened? Should I get him neutered for this reason? Or, do you think he could possibly have something wrong with him that other dogs can sense?

The only health issue that he has right now is demodex. He also has some sores around his penis, which he has been cleaning very often. I have not yet had them checked out. Do you know if this is indicative of something else? Should I be concerned?

I'm just trying so hard to find a reason why some dogs go after him like that. Maybe there isn't one...

I would really appreciate your help. My dog means so much to me, as I'm sure you understand, and I am so afraid of something happening to him. Any advice that you may have would be greatly

appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lisa

(& boxer Riggs)

Ed's Answer to Dog Attacks in Dog Park

There is no silver bullet here. This is a dominance/rank/lack of training and leadership problem.

It has nothing to do with mange or your dogs testicles (not at one year and not according to your description).

Dogs don't need to be aggressive to be attacked - they only need to be in the presence of other dog aggressive dogs. Some dogs are so poorly trained and so dangerous they only need to see another dog to attack. If you are willing to gamble your dog's life on that - well go for it. This week I got an email from a lady whose young dog was killed in a dog park.

The **ONLY SOLUTION** is to not go to dog parks. The fact is you should play with your dog and not rely on dogs to play with your dog. Dogs don't **NEED OTHER DOGS TO PLAY WITH** - that's a human misconception.

Your dog needs exercise it does not need to play with other dogs. Take your dog out and use some of the toys we sell and then use them to get the exercise your dog needs. When you do this you will notice - the bond with you and your dog will get better.

**Subject: Beware of the
Dog Park in Appleton, WI**

Hi everyone it was just brought to my attention that one of the puppies we sold to a couple was viciously attacked on Saturday. The attack happened at a place dogs are to go and be able to run and play. The dog park on French Rd and OO. According to a friend an adult pit bull was in the puppy area and attacked the puppy that was sitting next to the new owners. To save the puppies life the couple had to take it to the emergency animal hospital and incurred a \$400 bill. I will be going to court with the new owners to make sure that a situation like this never occurs again. This pit bull has attacked 3 other dogs.

I would like some input about how to go about getting vicious dogs that have attacked ban from the local dog parks.

Please feel free to email me....I will keep everyone posted as to the puppy's health and the court case.

Thanks

Anita (owner and breeder of German Shorthaired Pointers)

Remote Collar Pet Training

\$40.00 +s&h



2 Hours 45 Minutes Long

Comment on Dog Parks:

Mr. Frawley,

I am a first time owner of a Lab/Pointer mix and I wanted to thank you for your posted advice regarding many subjects, but especially Dog Parks. The dumb people I see at dog parks, the poorly trained dogs and the nasty conditions some are maintained in really add up to a bad situation. Prior to reading your article on the subject I thought they were an important part in raising a well mannered dog (socializing him etc.). Damn I was stupid. I stopped going immediately after reading your article as you identified many of the misgivings I had on the matter.

You pointed out that my dog does not need a dog park. I might be mildly retarded at times when it comes to raising the dog, but I am trying (with

the aid of some of your videos). I'll be damned if I let someone else or someone else's dog ruin everything I am trying to do. I think if people took the time to objectively look at dog parks the way your article encouraged me to, they would see a situation they would not be comfortable taking anything they valued to. I am glad I stopped going prior to anything bad happening.

Thank you for the good advice

Noah

Dear Mr. Frawley,

I'm president of the Juniper Park Civic Association based in Queens, New York. We publish an all-volunteer community newsletter called the "Juniper Berry" with a circulation of 5,000 to our membership and residents. We would like to reprint your wonderful article (with your permission) on... "Dog Parks" Why They Are a Bad Idea!!! "It's Your Job to Protect Your Dog" ...in our newsletter. We will of course include a short bio about you, your website and videos.

Currently the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation has an "unofficial policy," allowing dog owners to walk their dogs off-leash in NYC parks from 9pm to 9am. In June we had another serious attack on a 64-year old man in our neighborhood by an unleashed Rottweiler. He was trying to

protect his leashed Shih Tzu. His small dog was seriously hurt but survived, the man will need skin grafts to repair his badly damaged arm. We have also seen several dog fights in our park observing much of the danger signs you talk about in your article. We feel it is important to let dog owners know of the issues and dangers of bringing their pets to a dog park.

I've also attached a letter from a woman who was walking her dog in Central Park in January when an unleashed dog killed her small dog. She is still heartbroken and has not received an adequate answer from NYC officials.

We have also filed a lawsuit against the NYC Parks & Recreation in an attempt to compel them to stop the dangerous practice of allowing unleashed dogs to roam free in our public parks. We plan to use your article as evidence of the problems that can result from dog parks. Our hearing is set for August 29th.

Thank you for your wonderful website and informative articles. I've had dogs all my life and your articles are most enlightening.

If you agree to let us reprint your article please let me know if you have any photos that we could include in the article.

Sincerely,
Robert F. Holden
President

Juniper Park Civic Association
PO Box 790275 Middle Village, NY 11379
718-651-5865

Ed,

I wrote you earlier today about our 13 week old GSD and trying to make sure my husband is on board with training using your methods.

I just had to tell you that I've read several things on your website about your adamant position regarding dog parks. I've had dogs in the past and never been to a dog park, but have friends that rave about what a great place it is to take the dog. I was sold on your position, however, after reading your article entitled "Dog Parks - Why They Are a Bad Idea!"

This evening my two older children went with me when I took the puppy for an evening walk in the neighborhood. Now, with my previous dog being dog-aggressive, I'm in the habit of staying WAY clear of any other dogs while on walks. A woman and her daughter were on the other side of the street, each of them with a dog on a leash. We chatted for a second from across the street and she told me that her gorgeous GSD was a pure bred, and what type (I don't recall which, now). She asked about ours and said she was very well behaved for just being 13 weeks old. Then she said "you'll have to bring her to the dog park soon!"

I said something non-committal back to her like “Oh, I keep hearing that.” We said our goodbyes and my kids and I started walking the opposite direction from her and her dogs, remaining across the street from her.

Seconds later I heard vicious snarling behind me and the woman across the street started screaming! As we turned around to look behind us, she had been DRAGGED out into the middle of the street by her GSD on his lead. Another woman on my side of the street had been coming around the corner behind where we’d just walked and had just rounded a bush at the corner. When the second woman saw the GSD and owner, instead of crossing the street where she needed to go she was going to zigzag across the street to avoid the GSD group.

The GSD saw her little mixed breed on his leash and yanked his owner out into the street behind him to THRASH the little mix. He dove in and had it by the neck and just looked like he was killing it. The GSD owner kept shrieking unintelligibly behind her dog, whose leash had pulled off with his collar during the fight. She was swinging the leash at his head and the other dog’s owner was trying to get her dog away from the GSD, but nothing was working. I know it seemed longer than it was. It felt like it lasted an hour. More likely, the actual attack was more like a minute and half of the attacking dog violently thrashing the smaller dog while snarling. The smaller dog wasn’t even

making any sounds...

I scooped up my pup and moved farther down the street right away, but that was VERY SCARY. My pup started barking and whining in my arms and my kids were terrified. Eventually there were about 6 cars stopped in the road and people flying around everywhere trying to get the attacking dog off the other one. It was very badly hurt and they were on their way home to take it to the Vet.

There are several frightening and sad things about this in my mind.

First, the dog that was attacked was with an owner that was trying to avoid any contact between her dog and the attacking one.

Second, there was no way the owner of the attacking dog was getting her dog off the other dog. She had no control at that point.

Third, one of the folks that stopped to try to help was driving the woman and her attacked dog home up the street. I completely understand the GSDs owner being concerned and wanting to see if things are okay with the dog that was attacked. HOWEVER, she turned around the other way and began walking behind us and our dog with both of her dogs to see if she could find the woman's house. Now, if your dog had just lunged out of nowhere into the street to try to kill another dog, wouldn't it make more sense NOT to take that dog with you to the woman's house?! I just didn't get it.

And, in my long-winded way I wanted to acknowledge for the skeptics I've seen posted on your site that you are 100% right about not going to dog parks. My dog will never be in one.

Dear Ed

I couldn't decide whether to write this email, as it brings up bad memories, but here we go...

Dog Parks are really not good for socializing dogs and not because of the dogs as much as the owners. Most dog owners go to dog parks to socialize they do not keep it moving, so the dogs only really hang out with the dogs they can get along with or have accepted into their pack. When an outside dog goes over to another pack of dogs usually he is not invited as the hierarchy of that particular group is already set up... Sometimes they will welcome the new dog sometimes not...

Sometimes, people have dogs off the leash that attack other dogs, and then the owners really do not know how to break up the fight... I have been in a situation where my dogs went over to play with another dog (all were off the leash) and the dog was not having it, then he really tried to attack my dogs... The owner did nothing, and me I went yelling loudly at the dog , and then when he kept coming close I hit him with my leash... Needless to say I got in a loud yelling match with the other owner who was angry that I hit his dog

Another time my young male (also a puli) was playing with a very small pit bull, and it seemed like they were having fun, until the pit locked on my dogs ear.... the owner was able to get the dog off of my dog, and afterwards the pit wanted to play, but my dog was not having it, he wanted to leave... which we did...

The other scenario was with my husband, who is very athletic and takes the dogs to the park twice a day for exercise, I would say he does 4 miles each walk. He keeps them moving, and occasionally they play with dogs they know or have accepted in their pack. It had happened though that he kept running into this one woman with a German / collie mix (a big dog), and the dog was always attacking our dogs, so much so that if this particular dog saw them one field away he would go crazy and run toward them .. One day this dog broke off the leash and bit my dog in the butt (thank god she has a lot of hair she is a puli) but no bite marks were left... My husband would tell me of his escapades, I thought he could handle the situation... He always said the owner apologized but he was really starting to get irked by her.... I knew my husband could handle himself so I did not worry, until one Sunday, he comes in from the park , and he is really upset , and he said that the dog came charging after him, and he felt it was really going to do harm, so he hit the dog across the snout with a stick he found .. Well, needless to say everyone in that circle was up in

arms and came after him yelling, about 10 days later he was arrested for hitting the dog, the police called the owner and the owner pressed charges. He had to go to court and he won the case and had charges dropped.... To this very day whenever I see the woman on the street walking her dog, if her dog sees my dogs, she has to give him treats to divert his attention and must walk the other way... I can usually divert my dog's attention from the problem, but now they have picked up bad behavior of barking at dogs on the leash.

I have taken my dogs herding and they are around other dogs and they never get into fights, but also the herding instructor has set up a very controlled situation...

As much as I like the park, and appreciate the off leash hours ... I prefer to walk the dog during the on leash hours, and if I find a spot where no people are (usually during fall / winter) then I will let them off the leash ...

If people know their dogs attack other dogs, why have it off the leash. If you cannot control your dog why have it off the leash?

Brgds
n

COMMENT on Dog Parks:

Dear Sir,

Your write up on the dangers of dog parks and the letters sent in by others I found both interesting and believable to my knowledge as a veterinary technician.

I know the focus of the article was on the violent perils of the parks. But do you have another article or section on the unseen dangers that animals and humans can pick up while having “fun”? For instance, the dogs and their human owners can get hookworms from walking in the wrong spot (though it would be a slim chance the owners would easily get the parasite directly from the park, since they’d have to be barefoot). Other numerous intestinal parasites or protozoa could be left behind in the soil even if all the feces have seemingly been picked up. The potential problems are even more numerous for young dogs who have not been properly vaccinated for such problems as distemper or parvovirus! Don’t forget about the kennel cough that unvaccinated dogs might pick up from unhealthy poochies around them.

I just thought you might want to alert your readers to the unseens. By the way, I used to work for one veterinarian who said that he loved dog parks--they brought him such good business.

Sincerely, Meredith

QUESTION:

With great interest I just read about dog parks. I

have a 7 mo. old German shepherd female. My obedience trainer suggested a puppy play group to better socialize Elsa with other dogs. Do you consider play groups like a dog park? I am not sure that this is the best for her. She does have fun, but you really do not know the other dogs' temperaments and I have heard that if a shepherd has one bad dog experience it may be more aggressive towards other dogs? Thank you.

ANSWER:

This is a terrible idea. One never knows what the other pups are like and one pup can attack and injure another smaller pup.

Dear Ed,

I want you to know how thought-provoking I found your article on dog parks. We currently have two dogs, both female foundlings; a mix who appears to be mostly German Shepherd and Lab with some other bits and pieces, and a mostly, if not totally, Rottweiler.

Since they were puppies, we have taken them to our local dog park, from which they have contracted Parvo and some other minor doggie illnesses. I fully understand the dangers of dog parks, but am far more wary after reading the testimonials on your site.

There has been a history at our park of violence amongst the dogs, and I do believe that this is the

fault mostly of idiot dog owners. For instance, the woman who brought her teething miniature poodle puppy to the park and let it “play” un-monitored with large, adult dogs. When it bit ones’ ankle, it shook the puppy once by the scruff of its neck, and instantly killed it. On the other hand, the 6’ 5”, 280 lb guy with dreadlocks, I feel fully capable of backing up his three Daschunds in a conflict.

In spite of this, I feel that we have a ‘good’ dog park, as far as what is admittedly an idea that asks for trouble goes, for several key reasons. First is that no dogs are allowed on leashes, because when one dog out of twenty is on a leash, that one is in “defense” mode of their owner.

Secondly, no personal toys are allowed in the park, but there are plenty of donated ones left lying by owners, so there are always enough to go around

Third, I think that water is a key park dynamic. To avoid conflicts over water, there are about thirty different dishes in two areas at either end of the park, and owners fill recycled milk jugs with water and bring them to share. The closest to aggressive behavior that then manifests is dogs, usually smaller aggressive ones, putting their dirty paws in the water bowl when they’re done drinking to ruin it for the other dogs, which can get the dog banned from the park.

Finally, I think we’re just lucky. A person has never been attacked in our park unless they were trying to break up a fight. There’s a designated

“big dog” day on Sundays, and many of the dogs at the park don’t socialize very heavily with the other dogs, but most of them stay with their owners, run through the bamboo stand, and enjoy being off a leash for a while.

Both of our dogs have been in fights before, but neither is at all aggressive towards other dogs. After reading this section of your site, I realize how lucky we are. I believe that while admittedly not as responsible as we could be, we are good dog owners, because we try to understand our dogs as animals. For instance, we make sure that our dogs know not to defend us personally with violence, because as alphas, we can take care of ourselves. When they were in fights, our dogs never caused it, and we would forcefully remove the other dog and alpha-pin them by the throat on their backs until their owners came, and then leave immediately with our dogs. At the park, they rarely try to go out of our sight, and we never let them. We never stay for more than an hour, and we watch closely any interaction they have with smaller dogs, who are easily intimidated but usually have big attitudes to go with it.

We have a strong bond with our dogs, but they are not well trained. I know that is irresponsible, but we can trust our dogs not to harm other people or dogs, because we put them in those situations all the time, and watch them carefully and punish aggressive behavior. Not at the dog park, but in controlled situations. This is important because

our German-shepherd-lab mix, Luna, is very smart, and thinks of ingenious ways to get her and her sister out of the backyard, including digging behind the shed against the fence, where we can't see. When they get out, we worry for their safety from cars, but we know that they won't bother other people or dogs. Most of the time, by the time we know they're gone, they'll be waiting in the front yard to be let in. Also, since they are both large breeds and we can't walk them long enough each day for them to get enough exercise, especially on leashes, since we can't keep up, we've taken to walking them around without leashes around 10 PM or later, or riding bikes with them running beside.

Occasionally, of course, we will meet someone, and I don't know if it's from interaction at the dog park or not, but we never have any problems, though we grab their collars immediately for the other person or dog-walker's state of mind. If any other dog shows aggression, our dogs will run straight back to us, because they expect us to protect them, and don't appear to be overly concerned with showing the other dog its place. After reading your article on dog parks, I realize that our dogs' behavior could completely change just from one bad encounter. I don't think we'll bring them back. I also am repelled by the people who bring their young children with them to dog parks. Even kids who've had a dog their whole life very often don't understand animal-friendly behavior, or how to read animal warning signs.

I believe that you know what you're talking about, and I really don't; what knowledge I may have from owning dogs is nothing to what you know from being a professional. I would appreciate any comments you have on our dogs. I understand that you believe that a well-trained dog is a safe dog, and I believe that too, but we frankly don't have the guts or money to fiercely train our dogs, and we don't keep any dogs that we can't control, so I suppose this works for us.

Anyway, I was really affected by this article, and have taken also your advice to heart on how to break up a dog fight.

Sincerely,
Stella

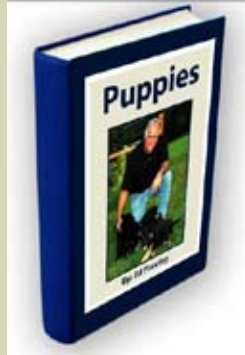
Where To Go From Here

Ground Work to Establish Pack Structure with Adult Dogs

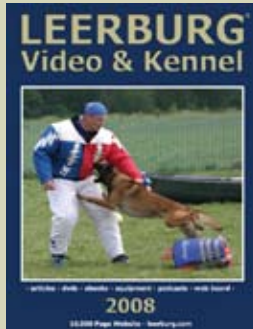


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