



Bickmore Risk Services & Consulting

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To: Jim Hill and Gertruda Luermann

From: Mary Beth O'Connell

Subject: Risk Management: Dog Parks

We have previously considered and provided advice to clients on the risk management issues associated with dog parks. Some of the aspects of a dog park include considerations and/or rules covering safety, noise, sanitation, location, maintenance, surfacing, and dog park clubs. Rules and signs must be clear, unambiguous, and posted in highly visible and conspicuous locations such as the dog park entrance.

The basic components of a dog park include:

- six-foot fencing
- double-gated latched entry
- And signs displaying the rules.

Some examples of dog park rules and risk management considerations that can reduce the risk of injury, noise complaints, and sanitation problems include:

Safety

The safety of humans and other dogs is a primary concern. There should be a separate partitioned area for small, timid, and elderly dogs. A potable water source will need to be provided at the park.

Sample safety rules

- Dogs must wear a collar with identification and current dog license and rabies tags.
- Dogs must be legally licensed and vaccinated against distemper, rabies, and parvovirus and regularly examined for parasites and treated as necessary.
- Aggressive dogs are not allowed at any time. An aggressive dog is defined as a dog posing a threat to humans or other dogs.
- All dogs must be under the owner's/handler's control.
- All dog owners/handlers must have a leash in hand at all times.

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- Dogs must be on a leash when entering and exiting the dog park.
- Dog owners/handlers must keep their dogs in their view at all times.
- Dogs shall not be left unattended.
- Only dogs four months and older are allowed.
- No female dogs in heat are allowed.
- Owners/handlers may only bring the number of dogs into the dog park that they can adequately control without endangering other dog park users; up to a maximum of two dogs per owner/handler are allowed per visit.
- Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult when inside the dog park.
- No toddlers, small children, or children under the age of 12 are allowed in the dog park.
- No dog food or food meant for human consumption is allowed in the dog park.
- No dog toys or rawhide are allowed in the dog park.
- Smoking is not allowed in the dog park.
- Dog owners/handlers must immediately fill in any holes their dogs dig.
- Chasing or running with the dogs is not allowed.
- Petting other people's dogs without the owner's permission is not allowed.
- Users are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries and/or damages caused by their dogs.
- Users are responsible for the health of their dogs and keeping their dogs properly hydrated.
- If dog park users do not abide by these rules, please contact local animal control at (INSERT PHONE NUMBER).
- Violation of the City Code results in fines and no further use of the dog park.
- Any bite of a person or other dog must be immediately reported to local animal control, and the parties involved must wait for an animal control officer to respond except in the case where immediate medical care is necessary.

Noise

Sample noise rules

- The hours of operation of the dog park are from 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.
- Dogs must not be allowed to bark excessively or to the annoyance of the neighborhood.
- No excessive shouting by owners/handlers.

Sanitation

Provide adequate disposal bags and refuse cans.

Sample sanitation rules

- Owners/handlers must have visible pet waste disposal materials at all times.
- Owners/handlers must pick up their dog's waste and properly dispose of it in one of the

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provided trash receptacles.

Location

Do not establish a dog park immediately adjacent to residential property lines. There should be a minimum distance of 200 feet between a dog park and any businesses or residences and a minimum distance of 100 feet to any bodies of water. Keep the area of heaviest use away from

residential property lines. Locate the off-leash area close to the parking lot to discourage owners/handlers from letting their dogs off the leash between the dog park and the parking lot. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements must be taken into consideration.

Maintenance

There should be a budget for maintenance of the dog park, such as the frequency of the collection and removal of debris, restocking plastic waste disposal bags, repairing signs, filling holes, repairing fences, irrigation, and maintenance of the surfacing.

Surfacing

Some of the dog park surfaces to consider include turf, bark or wood chips, decomposed granite, sand, heavily compacted base rock, and combinations of the above. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements must be taken into consideration.

Dog Park Clubs

An active dog park club is important to the success of a dog park. The organization can help educate users and provide self-policing and peer pressure.

BRS cannot foresee the full extent of the exposure. Therefore, cities should contract with a professional dog park consultant experienced in dog park design and management for the complete details as to the extent of the exposure and appropriate controls. Since Bickmore Risk Services does not provide legal advice, we recommend you seek the advice of your legal counsel to provide specific recommendations.