

Doggie Day Care Facilities

What a great idea – a day care for your dog. Why not? While you're working your 8-10 hour day your dog is playing and socializing with other dogs and being pampered. After your full day of work, pick up your dog and both of you are ready to sit down and watch some mindless television. Great idea, right? Wrong. When I began my dog training career 16 years ago I thought it would be a great idea also. Unfortunately, like everything else, the idea of day care for your dog is being ruined by people looking to make a quick buck. Day cares for dogs are going the route of bagel shops and pizza parlors; there will be one on every corner. But our dogs are not bagels and pizza's, our dogs require the care and eye of knowledgeable people. Day cares will continue to do well until someone or someone's dog gets hurt and then you will see the cream rise to the top and the day cares run by those looking to make a quick buck will cease to exist.

The Staff:

I have visited many day cares, and while they are supervised by enough humans, they resemble a 'dog's gone wild' video tape. You have gentle dogs being bullied, sometimes so subtly that the untrained attendees don't even notice; and you have well mannered dogs learning bad habits from other dogs without training. The thought of untrained humans supervising is absurd. Dog body language can be so subtle that you must have a trained eye to see what the dogs are doing to each other.

The day care should be managed by trained behaviorists and dog trainers. It is important that your dog is overseen by people trained to understand dog behavior and body language.

This will ensure that your dog is kept safe and not bullied by another. Most people do some form of training with their dog, it is important that their dog is not learning bad behavior or habits from other dogs that are not trained and allowed to run wild.

Playtime & Training:

Doggie Day care should consist of daily attention, care, playtime and training. Your dog should have an active day, physically and mentally. The training is very important. Daycare should coincide with your training program. Your dog should not only receive the physical stimulation he needs in the form of inter-dog play but the mental stimulation he can only get by learning. Dogs learn by watching other dogs and people. I've seen puppies pick up the bad habits of older dogs in the house hold and I've seen older dogs teach puppy's behavior, commands and housebreaking.

The day care should offer classes and instructions to people and their dogs or offer some form of training if the person does not have the time to work with his or her own dog. Dogs should be around other dogs that are being trained so that the new dogs learn from the more experienced dogs.

Dog Parks:

The same thoughts and ideas should hold true for public dog parks. You will never see one of my own dogs in a public dog run. Many dogs playing in public dog runs lack proper social skills. They play too rough and too aggressively. I don't want my dogs intimidated by a dog and feel they need to become aggressive or play aggressively. My dogs only socialize with dogs that I know, dogs that have manners and training and dogs that know when and how to play and not to play aggressively.

The Responsibility of Dog Owners:

It is most important that owners are taught what to look for and realize if their dog is learning proper social skills or being bullied by another. Owners must also keep an open eye and mind to the fact that their dog might be the one doing the bullying. Growling, hair raised and teeth showing are not signs of friendship. These dogs are not just playing but looking to scare or frighten another. Dog owners must also learn the difference between a group of dogs acting like a pack and picking or chasing one and dogs just playing and chasing each other for the enjoyment of dog play. If a dog looks frightened or is being chased and his tail is tucked, that is NOT fun.

Day care is a great idea but owners must look for a day care facility that is staffed by trained personnel. The staff should have dog behavior knowledge and also know how to pamper and play with your dog.