



Boothbay Region Dog Park

Introduction

In an attempt to include plans for a dog park at the Clifford Playground site, I prepared the following document to outline some basics of dog park creation, citing examples from Brunswick and Belfast, Maine.

There has been some local support and organization to look into the formation of such a fenced in area for dog owners to bring their pets. Based on my research, I believe a dog park would greatly add to the appeal and viability of the Boothbay Region.

Should you have any other questions or need for further research, please feel free to contact me at (207) 315-0176 or valeriemarieyoung@gmail.com

Happy Trails!
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Dog Parks – General Requirements

1. The land must be large enough to accommodate all the dogs and their owners. It should be at least one acre or more, which should be surrounded by a 4'-6' fence.
2. The property should also include shaded areas, with a suitable water source.
3. Dog parks need adequate drainage to preserve soil quality, which will preserve cleanliness. Grass, wood chips, and gravel are all suitable options for ground cover.
4. You will need sufficient parking space available near the dog park.
5. In order to ensure the safety of everyone, it is recommended that a double-gated entry be installed.
6. For the enjoyment and comfort of all the park's guests; benches and waste receptacles, along with plastic pick-up bags must be available.
7. Signs, which clearly display the rules and requirements for using the dog park, should be placed prominently throughout the park.
8. In addition, the concern over legal liability can best be handled by requiring dog owners to indemnify and hold harmless the sponsoring agency.
9. Dog parks require an on-going commitment from everyone. There will be routine cleanup and maintenance, along with making sure everyone follows the rules. These obligations can be attended to through regular work parties.

Other Towns with Dog Parks, according to: <http://www.doggoes.com/parks/maine>
Bangor, Waterville, Belfast, Augusta, Hallowell, Brunswick, Lewiston, Portland, Old Orchard Beach, Biddeford, Waterboro, Kennebunk, Ogunquit, Berwick



Concept sketch of Brunswick Dog Park

Brunswick Maine Dog Park

A clean and green dog park

Photos

Like 0



Lots of benches with views to the river



Small dog area – it's big!



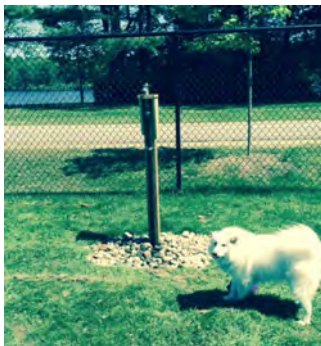
Rules and Etiquette signage



Beautiful views of Androscoggin River



Free poop bags in three locations plus two more at east and west bike path entrances



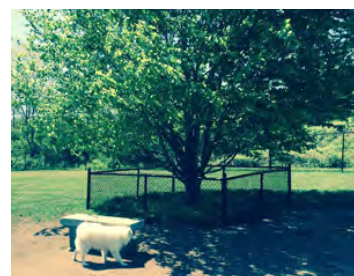
On-demand water spigots over drywells in both sides of dog park



Lots of parking at River Rd. entrance (800 ft. to dog park)



double gates at both ends of dog park 2



Some shade for people and dogs

Belfast Maine Dog Park

Photos



Sun Shade



All abilities can enjoy



Water spigot



All season fun



Doggie pools for summer

Dog Parks - Public Perception

“Belfast Dog Park” Facebook Page - 268 Likes, 73 Visits

“My girls and I stopped by and puggled the park this morning! It was our first visit. Beautiful place and we will be back more often! Hopefully I can join the next park clean up!”

“Spring is slowly on its way to Belfast, but the cold isn't stopping some from enjoying a good run around the dog park! Piper (back), Lily (center right) and Dexter (center left)”

“Love this Dog Park! Leon, our labradorable mutt can't get enough of it when we are up in Belfast/Searsport visiting family”

“Bark: Brunswick Maine Dog Park” Facebook Page - 487 Likes

“Took Mariah, Stella and Fiona to the dog park in Brunswick this afternoon for an hour or so..boy did they have a blast there were over thirty dogs at one point and all were having fun..”

“Hello, Bark! Lots of our customers tell us how much they love visiting there! Keep up the great work! Thanks from all of us at The Coastal Dog!”

”I was at the Bark: Brunswick Maine Dog Park today and saw total joy, a lovely dog running around chasing a butterfly. Great dog park.”

Bangor Daily News - “Dogs have their day at new Belfast park” by Walter Griffin

“It's no surprise the park has been an overnight sensation since the moment it opened two weeks ago... We have been getting a pretty steady stream of dogs from all over,” Chris Urick said Wednesday as she watered the park's newly planted trees. “The whole purpose and idea was to have a recreation area for dogs so they can play and exercise. The dogs are loving it and people are loving it. It's a great place for dogs to socialize and their owners to socialize.”

“We just felt there was a recreational need in the community and our goal was to make this a top-notch facility,” Urick said. “People driving through from out of state have seen it from Route 1 and came over. People from Bangor and other places in Maine have come down and let their dogs loose. We've had a lot of activity. I had a report of 17 dogs here at one time.”

Benefits of a Dog Park

- Dog parks encourage responsible pet ownership along with the enforcement of dog-control laws
- Dog parks give dogs a safe place to exercise and play
- It customarily reduces barking and other problem behaviors
- Dog parks provide senior and the disabled community members with an accessible place to exercise their pets
- Dog parks foster community up building through socializing

One town did a feasibility survey to gauge public interest in a dog park – see attached.

Dog Park Survey - Friends of Portage Lakes State Park

Over the last year, the Friends of Portage Lakes State Park has been working on the development of an off-leash dog park. In order to better understand public perception surrounding this issue, we are asking that you please take a few minutes to complete this user demand survey. Thank you! We greatly appreciate your timely response.

Do you have dogs?

- Yes
- No

Would you support an off-leash dog park in Portage Lakes State Park?

- Yes
- No

How often would you use a dog park? (check one)

- Once a month
- Once a week
- Multiple times per week

What is your resident zip code?

What features are essential in a successful fenced dog park? Rank your top three priorities from 1- 3, with 1 being the highest priority.

highest priority

middle priority

lowest priority

- Separate area for small dogs
- Double gated entry
- Pet waste station
- Shade
- Restrooms
- Benches
- Drinking water
- Parking close to site
- Staff/Volunteer monitors

Other suggested features

In order to have a successful dog park, owners must be responsible for cleaning up after their dogs. Would you pick up after your pet if pet waste stations were provided? (check one)

Yes

No

Dog parks can be staffed or unstaffed (depending upon funding). Would you be more likely to use a dog park that was staffed or unstaffed?(check one)

Self-monitored

Staffed

Makes no difference

Would you willingly remove your dog from the park if your dog showed signs of aggression? (check one)

Yes

No

Do you have other recommendations, concerns, or comments?

The Dog Park Committee is looking for volunteers to help with the implementation and management of the dog park. If you would like to volunteer, please provide your name, telephone number and/or email below so that we may contact you with additional details:

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Done

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**
Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!



Friends of Belfast Parks
www.friendsofbelfastparks.org

Belfast Dog Park

User's Guide



Sara Shute

Tips to help make dog park visits safe and enjoyable for you, your dog, and other users.

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Introduction

The Belfast Dog Park was created by Friends of Belfast Parks and members of the community as a gift to the city, its dog owners, and their dogs. In September 2007, the Belfast City Council approved the location of an off-leash dog park at Walsh Field, and in August 2008 the park opened—one of more than 700 off-leash recreation areas in the country

The dog park is located at the Walsh Field Recreational Area, on State Route 52 (Lincolville Avenue), near the intersection of US Route 1. Traveling west on Route 52, the entrance to the Walsh Field Recreational Area parking lot is just beyond the Jaret & Cohn Real Estate office. The park is open from dawn to dusk daily.

The purpose of this **Belfast Dog Park User's Guide** is to ensure that visits to the dog park are safe and enjoyable for dogs, their owners, and other visitors. The guide provides important information for all users, and should be reviewed before using the park for the first time and occasionally thereafter. The guide:

- ***explains the rationale for the rules that are also posted at the park,***
- ***offers guidance on how to use the park successfully,***
- ***provides information on how to protect your dog's health,***
- ***suggests tips for preventing fights, and***
- ***offers guidance for responding productively in the event of a fight.***

Thank you for taking the time to review this guide and for abiding by the rules posted at the park.

We hope you and your dog have a WONDERFUL, POSITIVE experience on each and every visit to the park!

Comments and or feedback regarding your dog park experiences are welcomed and encouraged. Please send your comments to the address provided below. Donations to help fund on-going maintenance and continued improvements at the dog park may be made payable to:

Friends of Belfast Parks
P.O. Box 947
Belfast, ME 04915

With memo notation: ***Belfast Dog Park***

Section 1 – Dog Park Rules

A list of basic rules has been established for the Belfast Dog Park, and MUST be followed by users of the park. The rules have been established to help ensure the safety of EVERYONE -- dogs and people -- using the park.

These dog park rules have been endorsed by the Belfast Police Department. Repeat violations of the rules may result in expulsion from the park.

BELFAST DOG PARK RULES

1. You enter this park at your own risk.

This is true for any recreational area in Maine that is open to the public.

2. You are legally responsible for your dog's behavior, and you alone are responsible for your dog's well-being.

If your dog bites someone or jumps and knocks a person down, Maine law holds you responsible for any injury. Although others are equally liable for their dogs' behavior, you are the person responsible for your dog's safety. (For more information, see the sections entitled ***Setting Up Success for Your Dog and Avoiding Good Times Gone Wrong***).

3. All dogs must be leashed until they are inside the FIRST GATE of the double-gated entrance to the park.

Walsh Field is used by Little League families, softball players and fans, and hikers, in addition to dog lovers. Before letting your dog out of the car, make sure his collar is snug and your leash is securely attached. (For more information, see the section entitled ***Sharing Walsh Field***),

4. Inside the fenced play area, watch your dog and have your leash with you at all times.

The dynamics of dog play can change quickly, and you need to be prepared to intervene quickly.

5. No children under 4 years of age are allowed inside the dog park. Children under 12 years of age must be with a supervising adult.

Many dogs are not comfortable around young children, and kids' high-pitched voices and quick motions can trigger predatory behavior in some dogs. In addition, young children often play on the ground, where dog feces may have deposited parasite eggs. A dog park is not a safe place for toddlers.

Older children should be reminded not to run inside the dog park and not to approach others' dogs without first asking the owners' permission. All children need to know that if a fight erupts, they should *walk calmly and silently* away from it. No one, of course, should tease any dog. It's advisable for people of all ages to wear shoes, rather than sandals or bare feet, in a dog park.

6. Dogs must be properly inoculated, licensed, wearing a collar with ID and rabies tags, and free of viral infections.

Maine law requires dogs to be vaccinated against rabies and licensed by the town, and any dog using public space should be vaccinated against distemper, parvovirus, and other diseases, as recommended by your veterinarian. If your dog may have a contagious condition of any sort, please do not put other dogs at risk by coming to the park. (To be aware of other possible health concerns, see section entitled *Veterinary Issues*).

7. No aggressive dogs are allowed in the park.

If your dog has a history of aggression or fighting, do not bring him or her to the dog park. Doing so is likely to make your dog's problem worse and cause trauma for others.

If your dog is normally peace-loving but is behaving aggressively or hounding another dog who is trying to evade the attention, take him or her out of the park. Fights can change a dog's social outlook for life, and both people and dogs can be seriously injured in them. (For more guidance, see the Section entitled *Avoiding Good Times Gone Wrong*).

8. No female dogs in heat or puppies under 4 months old are allowed in the park.

Females in heat are a notorious stimulus for fights and would leave smells in the play area that would arouse dogs well after the female left. As for young pups, their immune systems are not mature until the age of 4 months, and so the puppy's vaccine regimen cannot be completed before then.

9. No more than two dogs per person may enter the group play areas.

Handlers are responsible for watching their dogs at all times, and it's impossible to closely monitor several dogs at once. In addition, some dogs who live together are prone to "gang up" and bully other dogs.

10. Remove choke or pinch collars and head halters BEFORE OPENING THE SECOND GATE of the double-gated area.

Dogs must be free of such collars or halters once they are off leash and inside the park. If this type of a collar or halter catches on a fence or another dog's tooth, it can cause panic and serious injury or death due to strangulation.

11. You MUST pick up you dog's waste promptly everywhere in the Walsh Field Recreational Area, both along the walkway leading to the fenced dog park and inside off-leash area.

This is basic to responsible dog ownership, no matter where we are. During ball games, children play along the walkway, and dog owners share a responsibility to keep it clean. In the off-leash area, anything we don't pick up, our dogs are likely to wear home—and so may we. The longer piles sit on the ground, the higher the chance that they might transmit intestinal parasites or disease to other dogs. (See the section entitled ***Veterinary Issues*** for more information).

To help keep down the costs of maintaining the dog park, please carry your own waste disposal bags. Receptacles are provided, and, for days when you've forgotten a bag or need an extra, dog waste bags are available.

12. Fill in all holes that your dog digs.

Digging is part of normal dog play, but holes endanger dogs and humans alike. So please promptly backfill any holes that your dog digs within the park to prevent injury to other dogs or people,

13. Do not eat, smoke, or run inside the dog park.

Some dogs become aggressive in the presence of food (see the section entitled Resource Guarding). Cigarette butts are toxic to dogs. Running can arouse predatory behavior in excited dogs.

14. Do not give treats to anyone else's dog.

Some dogs have food allergies, and, again, some will behave aggressively in the presence of food. If you want treats at hand for training purposes, keep them out of sight and don't offer them to any dog but your own.

15. Leave your dog’s favorite toy and all rawhide chews at home.

Cherished toys and high-value chews, including bully sticks and pigs’ ears, also can trigger resource guarding.

16. If your dog seems timid, stressed, overly aroused, or aggressive, please take it out of the off-leash area IMMEDIATELY.

Every day poses different dynamics, even if it’s the same group of dogs playing, and a bad day at the dog park can alter a dog’s social confidence for life. If your dog becomes irritable or skittish, it’s probably time to go home for today. (See the section regarding **Stress Signals** for important information about this).

Note: The small dog area of the dog park can be used by larger dogs as a training or separate play area, provided that there are no small dogs present and there is no “fence fighting” between dogs in the two play areas. Please yield to the owners of dogs less than 25 pounds, if any arrive.

17. Any dog park user may ask someone who is not abiding by the rules to leave.

We each are responsible for keeping this park clean and safe for our dogs. Start by asking other dog park users for their cooperation.

Persistent problems or concerns can be discussed with the City Manager at 338-3370.

18. In case of a dog bite, call the police at 338-2420; in the event of an emergency, call 911.

Any serious dog bite to a human being should be reported PROMPTLY to the police.

Section 2 – Sharing Walsh Field

Like many other off-leash recreation areas nationwide, the Belfast Dog Park is situated in a multi-use public park complex.

The Walsh Field Recreation Area is used:

- *By dogs and their owners year-round;*
- *By hikers on the Little River Trail year-round;*
- *By birdwatchers, particularly in the spring, summer and fall;*
- *By the Belfast Little League in the spring and summer;*
- *By the YMCA softball league in the spring and summer; and*
- *By the families of ball players.*

It is important to note that the ball fields are off-limits to dogs AT ALL TIMES, unless explicit permission is granted by the Belfast Parks & Recreation Department. The ballfields are seeded with a special turf that is very urine-sensitive. Please be good neighbors and respect that those fields are dedicated to uses other than canine exercise.

If you come to the dog park during a ball game, you may need to negotiate busy sidewalks and pass by youngsters with hot dogs in hand. **Err on the side of caution.** If children are approaching and your dog is not trained to walk calmly past distractions, consider getting off the sidewalk and having your dog sit on the grassy berm until the kids go by. If a child asks to greet your dog, it is okay to say, “Thank you for asking, but not today,” or, simply, “No.”

If your dog’s training is at a point where you would like to practice calm greetings with children, tips for how to orchestrate it appear in a 2005 ***Downeast Dog News*** article entitled, “***Taking the Bite Out Of Hello.***”: The article is available for review on the Downeast Dog News website -

http://www.downeastdognews.com/stories/2006/10/taking_the_bite_out_of_hello.php

When Little League baseball and YMCA softball game schedules become available on-line, the Friends of Belfast Parks web site will link to them. (See the FOBP website at www.friendsofbelfastparks.org.)

Section 3 – Setting Up Success for Your Dog

On Your First Visit

Prepare for your dog's first visit by exploring the dog park *without* your dog. Enter the off-leash area, walk around, and feel free to ask questions of anyone in the park. Then, when you bring your dog for the first time, you'll be prepared to guide your dog appropriately and less likely to walk into surprises.

The first time your dog comes to the park, try to visit at a relatively quiet time of day so that your dog can experience this new place without being overwhelmed by potential playmates. Most parks experience *peak* usage early in the morning and after work hours on weekdays and at midday on weekends; regular users of the Belfast park can tell you when it tends to be busy or quiet here.

When you arrive, stand outside the fence and watch the dogs inside the off-leash area for a few minutes before you enter it. Ask yourself the following questions before deciding to enter:

- Does your dog already know the dogs in the park?
- Are they playing in a manner that's likely to be comfortable for your dog?
- Does your dog look keen to enter or reluctant?

If your dog seems afraid or reluctant to enter, remember that it is better to leave and come back at another time rather than to set your dog up for trouble on the first visit.

If you decide to enter the park, proceed through the double-gated entrance in the following manner:

- Take your LEASHED DOG through the FIRST GATE.
- Close the first gate behind you.
- Remove your dog's leash, halter, and choke or prong collar (if the dog is wearing one) while you are inside the double-gated area.
- Be aware that dogs that are already in the larger fenced area will likely gather around the gate to "meet and greet" your dog.
- Allow your dog to remain in the enclosed area for a few minutes until the other dogs retreat from the entrance area.
- When you AND your dog feel comfortable, OPEN THE SECOND GATE and let your unleashed dog enter the play area.
- Close the second gate behind you and follow your dog into the play area.

On Every Visit

Before entering, assess how many dogs are already playing in the park, the intensity of the play, and whether their owners are paying attention. Does this look like an appropriate situation to bring your dog into? If not, come back at another time.

If you decide to go in, please turn off your cell phone so that it can't distract your attention from your dog.

The entries to both the "Large Dogs" and "Small Dogs" areas are double-gated. If someone is leaving the park with a dog as you're entering, or vice versa, one of you should yield so that you don't have two gates open at once or two (or more) excited dogs meeting in the entryway.

Pass through the first gate, latch it, wait until any dogs inside the play area stop barking at yours, and then unleash your dog *before* going through the second gate. This will enable your dog to move freely if other dogs rush toward it in the play area. (Leashed dogs tend to become frightened or defensive if suddenly surrounded by other dogs.)

Always check to make sure gates are securely latched.

Inside the park, keep moving. Dogs tend to play more when their owners are in motion, and an owner standing or sitting in one place makes it more likely that a dog will guard the surrounding space.

Many dogs pay acute attention to who is entering a dog park, and sometimes dogs will bunch up at the entryway as another is entering. If an entering dog is swarmed and feels threatened, a fight can erupt.

The person inside the entryway should wait until the dogs disperse before allowing the dog in AND/OR the owners inside the play area can call their dogs away from the gate.

While your dog plays, stay engaged: Call your dog periodically, praise and reward, and then say, "Go play!" to put what he's going to do on your queue. Have your dog take occasional breaks from play to make over-arousal less likely.

If another dog owner is not following the posted rules, politely approach that person and ask for cooperation. It may be more comfortable if you ask another dog owner to accompany you. Again, you are the only person who is responsible for your dog's safety and well-being, and all of us are responsible for the park's well-being.

When you leave, leash your dog just before exiting the play area. Afterward, think the experience over: What did your dog learn? What did you learn?

Section 4 – Helpful Resources

The Friends of Belfast Parks has donated several books and a DVD to the Belfast Free Library that will be great guides for dog park users:

- ***Off-Leash Dog Play***, by Robin Bennett,
- ***Visiting the Dog Park***, by Cheryl Smith, and
- ***The Language of Dogs***, a DVD set by Sarah Kalnajs.

In addition, a DVD copy of a presentation entitled, ***“How to Read Your Dog: Behaviors and Body Language,”*** presented by canine behavioral consultant Don Hanson on April 26, 2008, is available for loan.

The resources listed can be checked out by anyone holding a Belfast library card.

Additional books and resources are available for purchase at local booksellers.

The Friends of Belfast Parks will continue to offer educational presentations for the community. The dates and times of upcoming presentations will be posted on the on the FOBP website (www.friendsofbelfastparks.org), and published in local papers and the ***Downeast Dog News***.

Watch for upcoming presentations and other events!

Healthy Play

Dogs nip while they play, chase, slam each other with their shoulders and hips, lie on top of each other, mount each other, and “fence” with their teeth. It can look scary and confusing to human beings, but it’s how dogs have fun.

The same behaviors, however, can be carried to the point of rudeness and bullying. The following questions can help dog owners sort good, healthy fun from abusive or bullying play:

- Do both dogs look happy most of the time?
- Are their tails, mouths, and movements loose and relaxed (having fun), or are they tight and stiff (not so fun)?
- Is one dog asking for space or trying to get away and the other dog isn’t allowing that? (See “**Stress Signals**” on page 10).
- Is the play edgy, hard-hitting, or causing fear for any participants?
- Is there healthy give and take in the play? Over a few minutes, does the dog who was on top take a turn on the bottom, or does the chaser become the chased?
- Is the play fluid, moving from one activity to another, or are the dogs “stuck”?
- Are two or more dogs ganging up on another who looks stressed?
- Is it becoming so intense that “snarks” and “scuffles” are happening?

If the play is not balanced, comfortable, and clearly happy for all parties, the dogs owners need to redirect the dogs’ activity, settle the offending dogs down with a time out from play (preferably outside the off-leash area), take some dogs home, or, if the Small Dogs area is not in use, move like-minded playmates over there.

Mounting

Mounting is a form of dog play that can be especially volatile, even if the dogs are well matched in size and physical condition. Mounting is not necessarily about reproduction or dominance, but can be a request for attention, an invitation to play, or a way for an overexcited dog to discharge energy. The problem is that some dogs are intolerant of mounting, and so it can trigger fights. Because mounted dogs often react to an innocent dog standing in front of them rather than to the one on top, the behavior can pose risks for surrounding dogs.

If your dog tends to mount, teach an “off” cue and intervene. Better yet, learn to see the behavior coming and redirect your dog before the other one is stressed by it.

9

Stress Signals

Depending on context, some perfectly mundane dog behaviors can also indicate stress. Some of these behaviors discharge energy that’s building up, and some signal that “I’m

not looking for trouble!” If you see *combinations* of the following in social situations, look for what may be stressing your dog. If the stressors don’t shift and you can’t positively influence your dog’s experience, then take your dog out of the park.

Signals that may indicate stress, discomfort, or an effort to avoid conflict include:

- increased activity
- marking territory
- scratching
- yawning
- shaking off
- sniffing the ground
- looking directly away from a perceived threat
- lip- or nose-licking
- front paw lift
- approaching slowly and in an arc
- sitting or lying down
- blinking
- sneezing
- slow, careful movements

Signals that request or demand greater distance from another dog include:

- staring
- growling
- snarking
- ears flat against head (uneasy) or erect and forward (confident)
- tension in body and face
- muscle ridges in face
- stalking or very erect, up-on-toes stance
- hair up on back (can also just mean excitement)
- urination and ground scratching
- tail up over back or straight
- tail wagging only at tip
- a brief look-away or turn-away at a tense moment.

Again, many of these behaviors have multiple meanings, and so the trick is to know your dog and read the whole dog in context. If Daisy has one paw raised and her ears back, and she glances away from a dog approaching her, then she’s probably feeling uneasy. If she has one paw raised and her ears forward as you head to the cookie jar, then it she’s probably thinking, “You rock, Mom, and I’ll do anything for a cookie!”

10

If you think Daisy is expressing discomfort at the dog park but then her body language loosens up and she goes back to playing freely, no problem—but if she keeps expressing stress or a need for space, it’s probably time to go home. If you’re not sure, ask someone else how they read her.

For more information, watch “How to Read Your Dog: Behaviors and Body Language,” available from the Belfast Free Library or go to greenacreskennel.com, click on “articles,” and read “Canine Stress and Calming Signals” and “Understanding Canine Stress.”

On Talking Terms with Dogs, by Turid Rugass, is also a helpful book.

Resource Guarding

Some dogs are very protective of objects they value. The resources a dog may guard can be food (including training treats), toys, their owners (“my hunter, my driver, my ball thrower,” etc.), doorways, and more—even feces or holes! Early signs of resource guarding could include hovering in a particular space or over a toy, lip licking (indicating stress), flared whiskers, curling the lip, and freezing as another dog approaches.

If your dog appears to be resource guarding, remove the resource, if possible. If that isn’t possible or doesn’t help, take him/her out of the park before she begins lunging at others or a fight erupts, and come back at a quieter time.

If someone else’s dog is resource guarding, move your dog away from that one, put away anything that seems to arouse the dog’s guarding impulse, point out aggressive behavior to the other owner, or leave.

Snarks and Scuffles

Just as tempers flare on a playground or basketball court, so they do in a dog park. When a dog nips or bumps too hard, another dog may respond by saying, “Hey, you jerk! That hurt!” That’s the meaning of a “snark,” a vocalization that sounds like a combined snarl and bark, and a “scuffle,” which sounds like a fight but ends just as quickly as it started.

If your dog has just had a scuffle, a time out may be advisable. If there are repeated snarks or scuffles, then it may be time to head home for the day and consider whether that particular group of playmates is healthy for your dog.

Fights

If handlers are on the ball, they will preempt rude play or bullying before fights break out. What to do, though, if a fight erupts?

11

One option is to do nothing. Very few dogs fight to the death, and no dog with a history of serious fighting should be at the dog park in the first place. Children who visit the dog park must be instructed ahead of time to walk *calmly* away from any fighting dogs, even

their own: do not run, do not scream, and do not get involved. Shrieking children can trigger tragic behavior from dogs.

Anyone interfering in a fight is at risk of being bitten. Highly aroused dogs do not always know what they're biting. If a person restrains one dog, the other dog might continue aggressing, provoking the restrained dog to bite the person holding him. Screaming or shouting can escalate tensions and bring more dogs into the fray.

If someone has been knocked down near the fight or the dogs are badly mismatched, it can be almost impossible to stand back. If you feel compelled to intervene in a serious fight, here are some options, **listed in descending order of safety**:

- Use water: grab a hose, pump tank or throw buckets of water on the dogs.
- Startle the dogs with loud noise, such as a loud whistle, an air horn, or clanging metal.
- Throw coats or blankets over the dogs.
- Use Direct Stop, a citronella-based spray.
- **Owners** can simultaneously lift the tail of each dog in the fight in order
- take the dog's back feet off the ground, or...
- Grab the rear legs and pull the dogs out of the fight.
- Release their legs the instant the fighting stops (to avoid getting bitten yourself) and keep the dogs separated.
- As soon as the fighting breaks, immediately lead the dogs away from one another and follow the instructions described in **After a Fight**, below.

After a Fight

Put each of the dogs involved in the fight on leash, check them for injuries, and assess whether veterinary care is appropriate. (See **Veterinary Emergencies**, below.)

As after a car accident, calmly exchange relevant information with the other dog owner(s), especially if there's an injury.

Remove the dogs from the park, one at a time.

Even dogs that did not join the fight are likely to be extremely aroused, and their owners also are advised to call it a day.

Individually or collectively, review and evaluate what went wrong: What could have been done to prevent the dogs' interaction from escalating to a fight? Why didn't people see the fight brewing and intervene earlier?

Health Concerns Related to a Dog Park

Just as children are more exposed to contagious illnesses when they go to school, dogs playing at a dog park may have more veterinary issues. Ask your vet what vaccines, flea and tick control, and preventative care are recommended. Also discuss the following risks so that you're well prepared to keep your dog healthy and playful.

Intestinal parasites. Several are transmitted through feces, and some eggs stay in the soil for years. (This and the fact that some insects that feed on feces are disease vectors are two reasons why it's so important to pick up immediately after your dog.)

It's a good idea to have a fecal sample checked for parasites at least twice a year. If you see signs of blood in your dog's stool, take a sample to your vet's office.

Injuries. If your dog begins limping or appears to be injured, end the play session. If soreness persists or recurs, consult your vet.

Canine bloat. This life-threatening condition is caused by gas building up in the stomach and causing it to rotate. It is more like to occur if dogs with full stomachs exercise vigorously or if dogs who are still panting heavily after exercise load up on water and/or food.

Moderate your dog's water intake during play sessions, and try to separate meals and intense exercise by two hours. For more information, talk to your vet or see this article in *Downeast Dog News*:

http://www.downeastdognews.com/stories/2007/02/canine_bloat_a_stealthy_killer.php

Heat stroke. Remember that dogs wear fur coats year round, and their cooling systems are not very efficient: they sweat only through their paws and otherwise cool themselves by panting.

On a hot day, the air can be too warm to help a very hot dog cool itself adequately. Be cautious during the "dog days" of summer: Exercise your pet during the cooler times of day. If you have to go out on a hot afternoon, keep it short, and wet your dog down.

Heat stroke is EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, and can be fatal for your dog! It is important that you are able to recognize the symptoms and respond quickly.

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Symptoms of heat stroke, an emergency condition that can cause permanent brain damage or death, include:

- rapid panting,
- bright red gums,

- unsteadiness,
- vomiting,
- an anxious expression or staring appearance.

If you wonder if your dog is in trouble or might have heat stroke, call your vet or take your dog to the vet IMMEDIATELY.

Veterinary Emergencies

If you're visiting Belfast and have a veterinary emergency **during regular business hours**, call **Little River Veterinary Hospital** (on Route 1 just south of Belfast) at 207-338-2909.

The nearest **after-hours** emergency veterinary clinic is the **Eastern Maine Emergency Veterinary Clinic** at 15 Dirigo Drive in Brewer, some 40 miles north of Belfast.. Phone: 207-989-6267.

**Acknowledgements –
Who Made This Park Possible?**

The campaign to establish a dog park in Belfast was led by the Friends of Belfast Parks (FOBP). Founded in 1995, FOBP is a volunteer-driven, membership-based, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, continued improvement, and broad community use of Belfast's parks and green spaces.

Through the years, the group has sponsored and coordinated the annual Arts in the Park fair, sponsored concerts in the parks, weeded and planted, painted, cooked, and carried on many other activities in support of its mission and in support of the city's Parks and Recreation Program

In early 2007, FOBP joined a few like-minded residents to research and propose a dog park for the city. In June 2007, the group made the lead gift of \$10,000 to launch the fundraising campaign.

Many other individuals and businesses helped to make the dog park a reality. The core committee of six was assisted by numerous others who provided monetary donations; made cookies and dog treats; served food at concessions; designed publications, hats, and t-shirts; provided moral support, critical thinking, and inspiration; and remained patient as the process met a few challenges along the way.

We thank the City of Belfast, the local Parks and Recreation Director and citizen commission, and all of our donors and supporters for making the dog park possible.

Please show your appreciation to the businesses and organizations that made monetary or in-kind contributions to this project. As the first edition of this guide is completed, they include:

Aubuchon Hardware, Belfast
Belfast Weinerfest
Caricatures by Paula Carter, Belfast
Coyote Moon Clothing and Gifts, Belfast
Downeast Dog News, Rockland
Dutton's Nursery, Morrill
Essentials for You, Belfast
Floral Creations, Belfast
Foster's Family Pet Center, Belfast
Green Acres Kennel Shop, Bangor
Huron Trading Company, Stockton Springs

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Left Bank Books, Searsport
Little River Veterinary Hospital, Northport
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From the beginning of this project through the writing of this guide, Lane Fisher of Waggle Tails gave freely of her professional knowledge, in addition to her personal energies.

Together we have created this park, and together may its users make it a clean, enjoyable, safe and harmonious place.

Friends of Belfast Parks
Dog Park Subcommittee
July 30, 2008

If A Fight Erupts ...

Stay calm. In most cases, do not attempt to get in the middle as you risk increased injury to the dogs and yourself. In a serious fight, if you feel something must be done, here are some suggestions:

- Startle/distract the dogs - Make a loud noise. Throw water or a coat/blanket on them.
- Owners simultaneously grab the tails and lift up, or the rear legs of their dogs and pull them apart, releasing them immediately.
- Leash them, move them farther apart and calmly check for injuries. If emergency care is needed, owners should trade contact information.
- Remove them from the park, one at a time.

Health Issues Related to a Dog Park

Heat Stroke – Dogs' cooling systems are not efficient. They sweat only through their paws and can only cool themselves by panting. On hot days, take them out earlier and/or later in the day and keep it short. Wet your dog down. **Heat stroke can cause brain damage or death.** Look for **rapid panting, bright red gums, unsteadiness, vomiting, anxiety or staring.** Bring to the vet *immediately*.

Bloat – Life threatening, bloat can occur if your dog is exercising vigorously on a full stomach, or if they eat a meal while still panting heavily after exercise. Gas builds up in the stomach causing it to rotate. Bring to the vet *immediately*.

Intestinal Parasites – Transmitted through feces, eggs can stay in the soil for years. **Please pick up dog waste immediately!**

Merrymeeting Dog Park

In Memory of Jake Horgan

Tips for a safe & enjoyable visit!



Lab Dance art by Jim Williams
MainelyLabs.com

www.barkmaine.org

Merrymeeting Dog Park in Memory of Jake Horgan
is a privately funded project in cooperation with
the Town of Brunswick.



Everyone who enters this dog park does so AT THEIR OWN RISK.

Per Maine State Law, dog owners or keepers are solely liable for damages or injuries caused by their dog(s).

No aggressive dogs. If your dog has a history of aggression, bringing them to a park setting may worsen the problem and cause trauma and injury for other dogs and people. A single aggressive encounter can negatively impact a victimized dog for life!

Dispose of pet waste immediately. What we don't pick up, we and our dogs may wear home. Feces transmit intestinal parasites or disease to other dogs. Bags and receptacles are provided!

Dogs must be licensed, free of infections, parasites, and have ID and rabies tags. Maine law requires all dogs to be licensed and vaccinated against rabies. Dogs using public spaces should also be vaccinated against parvovirus, distemper and other diseases as recommended by your vet.

NO female dogs in heat, or puppies under 4 months of age and without core vaccines allowed. A female in heat will stimulate fights and leave odors that will agitate dogs. Puppies under 4 months do not have mature immune systems, therefore their required vaccines cannot be completed before then.

Bring no more than (3) dogs per adult inside the park. It is difficult to closely monitor multiple dogs. Also, some dogs that live together may "gang up" on and bully other dogs.

No children under 4 years old allowed. Children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult.

Some dogs are uncomfortable around young children and high-pitched voices can trigger predatory behavior. Young children on the ground can also be exposed to feces that may have parasites. Older children should be reminded not to run inside the park as it can arouse predatory behavior, and to always ask owners' permission to approach their dogs. If a fight erupts, they should walk calmly and silently away. Bare feet are not advisable.

You may ask dog owners not observing these and other posted rules to leave the park. If necessary, ask someone else to join you before approaching another park user and politely asking for their cooperation. For extreme or persistent problems with owners or dogs, call **Brunswick Animal Control at 725-5521. In the event of an emergency, call 911.** Any serious dog bite to a human being should be reported PROMPTLY to the police.

Animal Emergency Clinics (for after hours and weekends): **37 Strawberry Ave., Lewiston (207-777-1110), or 739 Warren Ave in Portland (207-878-3121).**

Your First Visit ...

Visit at a relatively quiet time of day so your dog won't be overwhelmed. Peak usage tends to be early morning and after work hours on weekdays, and midday on weekends. Stand outside the fence with your LEASHED dog and observe the off-leash dogs inside before entering. If your dog seems reluctant to enter, it is better to try again at another time.

If your dog seems comfortable, take your LEASHED dog through the first gate and close it securely behind you. Remove their leash, halters, and spike, prong or pinch collars while in the double-gated area. Wait until any dogs that gather outside the second gate to meet your dog have moved away. When you are both comfortable, enter with your dog and close the second gate securely behind you. And of course ... **HAVE FUN!**

For more detailed information and resources, visit www.barkmaine.org.

Thank you for keeping YOUR park safe and clean!

TALKING DOG

Dogs communicate using body language more than they do vocally. Here's a quick guide to get a good idea of what your dog is telling you. Look at the whole of the dog: head, face, body and tail to get a more accurate idea of what the dog is saying.

FEARFUL / ANXIOUS / STRESSED

In all cases, respect the dogs need for space and offer signs of appeasement and peace: See the Doggy Dos and Don'ts poster



If not read correctly, stress, anxiety and fear often lead to behaviour commonly termed "aggressive", as the dog attempts to make it clearer that they are uncomfortable: raised hackles are a sign of fear:



TAIL POSITIONS

tucked



in line with spine



high and rigid

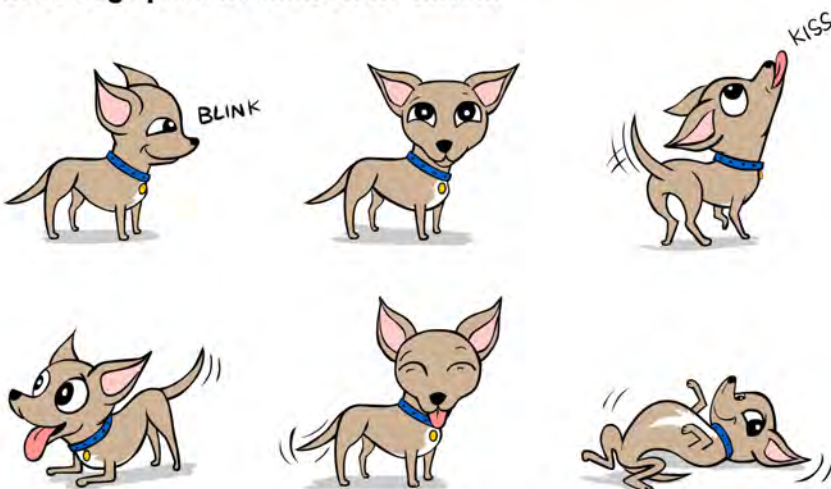


low and wagging slowly



CONTENT / HAPPY / SOCIAL

These dogs pose no immediate threat.



TAIL POSITIONS

relaxed



high and wagging quickly



casually at 45 degrees

