

DOG PARKS

People view dog parks as a great way to socialize and exercise a dog. However, there are potential dangers to consider before taking your dog to a dog park, especially a new foster dog that you don't know well.

One concern is the risk of injury. You do not know the temperaments of the other dogs or how well socialized they are. Your dog might be friendly, but that doesn't mean other dogs won't still be aggressive. You don't know if dogs at the dog park are well-trained or out of control. Many dog owners turn their dogs loose at the park, don't pay attention to what their dogs are doing, and don't take responsibility for their dog's actions. Some dogs may not have been spayed or neutered and unaltered dogs are typically more aggressive. If dogs of all sizes are allowed in the same area, small dogs are especially at risk for injury or worse. Puppies and juvenile dogs may be too exuberant for other dogs to accept.

Health concerns are another important issue. Dangerous diseases and parasites can be transmitted at a dog park. You don't know if other dogs are up to date on vaccinations. Young and old dogs may be even more at risk. GRFR puppy policy states: Puppies should not leave your home or yard or be exposed to any other dogs unless you are certain they have been fully vaccinated and are older than six months. They should not go to parks or PetSmart or anywhere else until they have their last booster shot, as they could contract a potentially lethal virus.

Safer alternatives to dog parks:

- Set up play dates with people and dogs you trust.
- Find a reputable doggy day care or day camp with a skilled staff.
- Take your dog to a basic obedience class run by a dog trainer to learn how to introduce and socialize dogs.
- Walk, run, and/or play with your dogs yourself!