

Greyhounds and Dog Parks

We often get questions about dog parks and as the weather gets warmer many folks want to take their greyhounds to the dog park. Dog parks can be a wonderful thing and it is a delight to see our babies run. But dog park can also be very dangerous.

Running your greyhound(s) with other greyhounds:

- This is the best scenario, with no other breeds
- ALL greyhounds must be muzzled
- Remember that your greyhound has very thin skin which tears extremely easily; a simple nip or nail strike can turn into a major vet visit.
- Again, ALL greyhounds must be muzzled. Should one dog nip at another (which all dogs are prone to do) and one squeals you will then have a dog fight on your hands. You don't ever want to have to deal with a dog fight!

Running your greyhound(s) with other breeds:

- If you have a high prey greyhound, do not run him/her with other breeds. You never know when another small breed dog will enter and if you are nowhere near your dog you won't be able to stop the chase and possible severe injuries/death.
- DO NOT muzzle your greyhound with other unmuzzled dogs; you will leave your greyhound unable to defend itself.
- Remember that your greyhound has very thin skin which tears extremely easily. Again, a simple nip or nail strike can turn into a major vet visit.

Some other things you should be aware of:

- Any more than 2 dogs is a pack. So when a group of dogs (3 or more) are allowed to run together in an area where there are no strong human pack leaders, they instinctively try to establish a pack order.

Too often this results in dog fights to determine which rank a dog will assume.

- Pay attention to how many dogs are in the park before entering. If there are too many, it may be wiser to find an alternative activity. Also take note of whether the dog owners are paying attention to their dogs or are off chatting in one corner and not paying attention to their dogs (not good).
- Overly large areas. In large areas, while inviting looking, don't assume you can get to your dog (or any group of dogs) should a scuffle start. Greyhounds have been known to run themselves basically to death because they started chasing something. You are better running your dogs in a smaller area than a too large area. What is a good size? Most probably the size of a horse arena is a good gauge.
- Know where all the gates are and be able to see them to avoid an escape by a gate being left open by a child or someone not paying attention.
- Make sure the dog park is secure with all gates closed. Some folks take bungee cords with them and secure the gates closed so that someone can't walk in accidentally and let a dog out or surprise you with another dog.
- Dog parks can be a haven of intestinal parasites (e.g. worms) and illnesses, so check your dog often for parasites and anything unusual.
- Many a dog has been injured at a dog park. We know of a couple of greyhounds that have been killed at a dog park, plenty of greyhounds that have been injured at a dog park, and several greyhounds that have killed or severely injured other small dogs.
- Watch your dog for dehydration. With greyhounds this can happen very easily, especially as we head into the warmer weather again.
- Don't let your greyhound run for too long - they can and will overexert themselves possibly resulting in injuries.
- Absolutely do not run them in the hot weather or you will have a case of heat exhaustion or possibly death on your hands. Know the signs of heat exhaustion.

- Pay attention to the type of fence and height of the fence around the dog park. Can a dog get through the fence? If so, don't use the park. What height is the fence? It is important that you know your dog and the fence height. Although most greyhounds aren't jumpers, there are those that can easily jump a 4-foot fence. If you have one of those and the fence is only 4 foot high, don't use the park.
- Have your squawker handy, just in case. And be sure your dog is trained to respond to a squawker (most will respond, but not all).

Things to do:

- Go to the park at off-peak hours when there are unlikely to be other dogs there and the weather is cooler.
- Take plenty of water and a first aid kit with you.
- After running, check your dog over fully for minor injuries and treat as necessary.

Hopefully that hasn't scared you too much. Dog parks can be a greyt thing and a wonderful way to exercise your dog, but use caution and common sense.