

PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park

User's Guide



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

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Introduction

The PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park was created by the Kingdom Dog Park Committee and members of the community as a gift to the Town of Derby, its dog owners and their dogs. In September 2011, the committee approved the location of an off-leash dog park on the 4-H Road, and in October 2012 the park opened one of close to 1,000 off-leash recreation areas in the country.

The purpose of this **PetSafe Kingdom 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
- 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(s) have a WONDERFUL, POSITIVE experience on each and every visit to the Park! Comments and/or feedback regarding your dog-park experiences are welcome 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:

Town of Derby

PO Box 25

Derby, VT 05829

802-766-4906

With memo notation:

PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park

PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park Rules

A list of basic rules has been established for the PetSafe Kingdom 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.

1. You enter this park at your own risk.

This is true for any recreational area in Vermont 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, Vermont law holds you responsible for any injury. Although others are equally liable for their dog's 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.

Before letting your dog out of the car, make sure his collar is snug and his leash is securely attached.

4. Gates must remain closed except when entering or exiting the off-leash area, and only one gate may be open at a time.

Because our Park is located very close to the road, not keeping the gate closed could result in our four-legged friends endangering their lives.

5. No Puppies under 4 months old or sick dogs are allowed in the park.

Young puppies' immune systems are not mature until the age of 4 months, and the puppy's vaccine regimen cannot be completed before then.

6. All dogs must be spayed or neutered.

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. Aggression tends to be higher for intact males.

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

Vermont law requires dogs to be vaccinated against rabies and licensed by the town, and any dog using public spaces should be vaccinated against distemper, parvovirus, and other diseases as recommended by your veterinarian. If you suspect that 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**).

8. 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 collar or halter catches on a fence or another dog's tooth, it can cause panic and serious injury or death due to strangulation.

9. 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.

10. No aggressive dogs are allowed in the Park.

If your dog has a history of aggression or fighting, do not bring him 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 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**).

11. Handle conflicts with respect, grace and good humor.

We are all proud dog owners, and want to feel safe, both physically and emotionally. Be responsive to others' individual preferences. ~ We're all in this together! ~

12. You MUST pick up your dog's waste promptly everywhere in the Dog Park, both in the parking lot and inside the off-leash area.

This is basic to responsible dog ownership no matter where we are. In all areas of the Park people and dogs can step in waste, and dogs can roll in waste that is not picked up. 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 when possible. For days when you've forgotten a bag or need an extra, bags are available at the receptacles.

13. No more than three 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.

14. No children under 4 years of age are allowed inside the Dog Park. Children under 16 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. No one, of course, should tease any dog. It's advisable for people of all ages to wear appropriate foot wear. Sandals and bare feet are not permitted.

15. Smoking is not permitted within the Dog Park or parking lot.

Cigarette butts are toxic to dogs. Second-hand smoke is toxic to people and dogs.

16. 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.

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

Each day poses different dynamics, even if it's the same group of dogs playing. 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 the day. (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 who meet the criteria for the small dog area.

18. Fill in all holes that your dog digs.

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

19. Please do not allow children to run inside the Dog Park.

Running can arouse predatory behavior in excited dogs.

20. 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.

21. Any Dog Park user may remind someone who is not abiding by the rules to review the rules.

Each person is 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 reported by calling the Derby Town Office 802-766-4906.

22. In case of a dog bite or in the event of an emergency, call 911.

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

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 will be 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 Park can tell you when it tends to be busy or quiet.

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

- Does your dog already know the dogs in the Park?
- Are dogs 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. (See the Section regarding **On Every Visit** for important information about this).

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 another time.
- If you decide to go in, please limit your cell phone use so that it doesn't distract your attention from your dog.
- If someone is leaving the Park with a dog as you are 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.
- Take your LEASHED DOG through the FIRST GATE.
- Close the first gate behind you.
- Always check to make sure gates are securely latched.
- 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. Your dog must have a collar and tags.
- Be aware that dogs that are in the larger fenced area will likely gather around the gate to "meet and greet" your dog. If an entering dog is swarmed and feels threatened, a fight can erupt.

- 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.
- 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.
- While your dog plays, stay engaged: Call your dog periodically, praise and reward, and then release her to return to play. 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. You are ultimately responsible for your dog's safety and well-being, and all of us are responsible for the Park's well-being.
- When leaving bring your dog into the entryway, attach his leash and then exit, being sure all gates are securely closed.
- Afterward, think the experience over: What did your dog learn? What did you learn?

Helpful Resources

The Daily Memorial Library has several books and a DVD that will be great guides for dog park users:

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

The resources listed can be checked out by anyone holding a Daily Memorial Library card.

Additional books and resources are available for purchase at the **Woodknot Bookshop**.

The PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park will continue to offer educational presentations for the community. The dates and times of upcoming presentations will be posted on facebook and published in local papers.

Watch for upcoming presentations and upcoming events!

Avoiding Good Times Gone Wrong

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.

However the same behaviors 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 8 and 9).
- 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 dog who looks stressed?
- Is it becoming so intense that “snarks 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 Dog 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 being mounted which 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.

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, 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, 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 she’s probably thinking, “You rock, Mom, and I’ll do anything for a cookie!”

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.

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 out of the Park before he begins lunging at others or a fight erupts, and come back at a quieter time.

If another dog is resource guarding, move your dog away from her, 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?

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 to 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 below in **After a Fight**.

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**).

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?

Veterinary Issues

Health Concerns Related to a Dog Park

Just as children are exposed to contagious illnesses when they go to school, dogs playing at a dog park may have more veterinary issues. Ask your veterinarian which vaccines, flea and tick control and preventative care are recommended. Also discuss the following risks so that you are 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 waste 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 veterinarian's office.

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

Canine bloat. This life-threatening condition is caused by gas building up in the stomach causing it to rotate. It is more likely 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 veterinarian.

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.

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 veterinarian or take your dog to a veterinarian IMMEDIATELY.

Veterinary Emergencies

If you're visiting Derby and have a veterinary emergency, you can call:

Newport Veterinary Hospital
(802) 334-2655
246 Route 105
Newport, VT 05855

The Animal Doctor
(802) 334-1503
56 Eastern Ave
Newport Center, VT 05857

Barton Veterinary Hospital
(802) 525-3644
290 Elm Street
Barton, VT 058

Derby Pond Animal Hospital
(802) 766-2222
Route 5
Derby, VT 05829

After- hour emergencies will be forwarded to the Veterinarian on call.

Acknowledgements: Who Made This Park Possible?

The campaign to establish a dog park in Derby was led by the Kelley Family. In 2011 the Town of Derby formed a Dog Park Committee and set aside 2 acres of Town land along the 4-H Road as the future site of a fenced-in off-leash dog park. The Committee was tasked with the job of building and maintaining the park at no cost to taxpayers.

A capital campaign program was launched, and volunteers began the job of clearing the land for the park. In 2011 the committee entered an online contest sponsored by PetSafe to win funding for the park. While we did not win in 2011, we put in a good showing for a community our size. In 2012 PetSafe expanded the contest and added a \$25,000 prize to the community that received the most votes per capita. Derby once again entered the contest, and this time we were victorious.

With the prize money from the PetSafe contest, funds from the capital campaign, fundraising events, in-kind contributions and volunteer workers, the PetSafe Kingdom Dog Park has become a reality.

The core committee was assisted by numerous others who provided monetary donations; made cookies and dog treats; designed publications; provided moral support, critical thinking, and inspiration; and remained patient throughout the process.

We thank all of our donors and supporters for making the dog park possible.

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

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*Roger Gosselin Inc.
PetSafe*

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Newport Veterinary Hospital

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Derby Pond Animal Hospital	Newport Farm & Garden
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The Front Desk	Taylor-Moore Agency
Gerry and Ernie Gagnon	Vermont Integrative Veterinary Assocaites
Jo Gilder	Wider Than The Skey
Green Mountain Electric	Worth's Seamless Rain Gutters
Green Mountain Mulch	Jackie and Ken Young
Jim Campbell Real Estate	

Our Volunteers:

Sherry Aubin	Terry McMillan
Patty Beckwith	David Pine
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Sam Greenwood	Willey Tetreault
Meghan Guyer	Cameron Thompson
Rob Guyer	Travis Waterman
Don Hunt	Derek Wells
Ally Kelley	Storm Wells
Ann Kelley	Kendra Wilson
Bob Kelley	Kristal Ohliger-Wilson
Dave LaBelle	

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

Derby Dog Park Committee:

*Bob Kelley, Chair
Sherry Aubin
Pam Greenwood
Ally Kelley
Susan Taylor*

*Ann Kelley, Vice-Chair
Laura Gobeil
Sam Greenwood
Carol Piper*

September 30, 2012

