

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE'S AN INCIDENT AT THE DOG PARK???

There have been recent reports of conflict between dogs (and hence, humans) at the Butler Farm Dog Park. We want the dog park to be a pleasant experience for all who use it. We know, however, that interactions between dogs can be challenging to manage when they are playing. The dog park is a place for our pets to play and socialize, but play can escalate, and it's up to us humans to monitor and make sure all goes well. Below are some strategies to help prevent unpleasant experiences, injuries, or conflict at the park, and some guidelines of what to do in the event conflict occurs:

What can I do to prevent conflict between my dog and others at the dog park?

1. Do NOT bring your dog to a dog park if he or she does not demonstrate consistent recall skills. This means your dog comes to you on command. This is necessary for you to manage your dog's behavior. No recall skills = no dog park. Work on this skill before introducing your dog to the park;
2. If your dog has been cooped up for a long time before coming to the dog park, consider a short walk first. While inconvenient, a dog who is a bit more rested may be a bit less aggressive;
3. Do NOT allow your dog to charge up to a dog who is entering the park. This is a vulnerable time for a dog. If this occurs, interrupt this and move your dog away from the other dog;
4. Do not allow your dog to bully, nip, bite, mount or pounce on other dogs. This is not appropriate play behavior, even for dogs, and can cause injury and long-term damage to a dog. If this happens, see #3;
5. Separate small and large dogs – this is why we have the small dog part of the park;
6. Don't bring a female dog who is in heat;
7. Don't leave your dog on a leash in the park. This triggers fights. If your dog needs a leash – don't bring him or her to the park – work at home on recall behavior first;
8. Pay attention to your dog in the park! Inattention is the #1 factor associated with conflict that escalates. Stay off your phones and be aware of the behavior of your dog and body language of other dogs.

What if a conflict/ fight does occur – what should I do?

1. Don't assume the dogs will "work it out". If you see signs of problematic behavior, approach your dog from behind and pull your dog away. If your dog is the aggressor, grab the hind legs and pull him/ her away from the other dog. If you are not able to do this when your dog is aggressive, you should not bring your dog to the park;
2. Exchange contact info with each other, even if the dogs do not appear injured. If your dog is the aggressor, be fair and share contact info;

3. Report incidents to in writing to the Dog Park Committee (send to the Town Planner – Laurie Connors) at the Millbury Town Hall;
4. If your dog has been bit, take him or her to the vet and get him or her checked. Also, report any bites to Millbury’s Animal Control Officer.

Please refer to the Butler Farm Dog Park Incident Policy, on the park’s website, for more information about responding to incidents.

Butler Farm Dog Park is a public park open to all – but it is managed by volunteers, so it is up to us all to manage the experience. Be fair to others and do your part to make sure everyone has a great time.