

Dogs In Need Of Space

BEHAVIOR SERIES



Dogs are considered a highly social species. They are interactive, form social bonds with others and, if given the opportunity, live in groups or “packs.” However, despite their general social nature, there are some dogs that, for a myriad of different reasons, do better with a little extra space. As dog owners, you might forget that not every dog is like your own dog and even if your dog has the best of intentions, its behavior could hurt or frighten another dog.

To be the best dog owner, remember that there are some dogs that may need a little extra space from other dogs (DINOS – Dogs in Need of Space). Here are some possible scenarios:

- You walk your exuberant, friendly, 2-year-old Labrador Retriever off-leash in an official on-leash zone and he charges up to the 13-year-old Golden Retriever with advanced arthritis. Think how frightening and painful that may be for the aged, arthritic Golden Retriever and his owner.
- You encounter a dog on a therapeutic walk post orthopedic surgery. Your “friendly” Labrador could jeopardize the other dog’s entire operation and recovery.
- Consider how a shy, rescue dog that perhaps didn’t have the best start in life may become defensive when another dog suddenly rushes up.
- Don’t forget about the size difference. A Great Dane approaching a Miniature Dachshund could be overwhelming.

To be a responsible dog owner, you not only have to consider your own dog but the potential impact that your dog may have on other dogs, regardless of your dog’s intentions. You should always obey leash laws. Your dog should never be allowed to approach or rush up to another dog, without first getting an “OK” from the other dog owner.

Reasons why dogs needs space*

- Service and working dogs
- Illness or recovering from surgery
- Leash reactivity
- Injuries and painful physical conditions, like arthritis
- Intolerance of other animals
- Fearful of unfamiliar people
- Aging and elderly
- Learning self control around other dogs
- Fearful of unfamiliar or rowdy dogs
- Are owned by people who want to be left alone

Things to do

- Obey leash laws. Dogs should be kept on leashes at all times except in designated off-leash areas. Dogs that are leashed may feel threatened by free roaming dogs.
- Ask permission before approaching another dog, *i.e.*, “Can my dog say hi?”
- Listen to the responses, *i.e.*, “Sorry, no. I have a dog that needs space.”
- Let the dog in need of space pass without interaction.
- Respect everyone’s space.
- Pay attention to your dog and the environment. If your dog starts to look anxious or a dangerous situation develops, remove your dog calmly from the situation.
- If you do allow your dog off-leash in designated areas, make sure your dog has a reliable recall (come) command.
- Even when in a designated off-leash area, dog owners should have the leash in their hands at all times because if there is a problem, they should be able to quickly leash and remove their dogs from the situation.

*Used with permission from DINOS™. Dogs in Need of Space.
<http://notesfromadogwalker.wordpress.com>.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

Things to avoid

- Do not allow your dog to approach, harass or chase a dog in need of space.
- If your dog is anxious or aggressive around other dogs, avoid off-leash dog parks.
- Don't allow your dog to rush up to other dogs, especially if leashed. The leashed dog is very vulnerable in this situation.
- Avoid situations that seem out of control; a dog park with too many highly aroused dogs can quickly turn into a dangerous situation.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield veterinarian to talk about socialization issues or visit Banfield.com.

