



In order to improve your enjoyment of the Leash Free Park (LFP) we have put together the following guidelines.

### **COMMON BEHAVIOURS YOU MIGHT SEE (MIGHT NOT LIKE), BUT ARE NATURAL, AND NOT NECESSARILY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR:**

It is up to park users to negotiate amongst themselves their comfort level of their dogs' interactions within the LFP.

We all love our dogs and that is why we take the time to go the LFP. Some people appear to be more protective of their dog than others and this is usually the result of conflict between dog owners. Apparently, the conflict amongst dog owners is HIGHER than the conflict amongst the dogs. Some dog owners may or may not have a sound level of understanding dog behavior. Therefore, it is up to the individuals to decide what they are comfortable with when it comes to their dog's interaction with others in the park.

We acknowledge that at the extreme end of the continuum, some of these behaviours will be considered unacceptable by dog owners as they may lead to injury or spark defensive/offensive behaviour in other dogs. However, we stress that this is up to the owners to negotiate the level at which they are comfortable with these behaviours, because most of the time, such behaviours are normal, and sometimes necessary.

- Charging** - Dog or dogs quickly race up to single dog. If your dog is charging, you should do your best to call him back. If your dog is charged by another, don't panic-it will take some time for the dogs to establish their new place in the hierarchy, given the newcomer.
- Mass greetings** - No, we are not talking about taking your dog to church although some dogs are angelic and others seem devilish. New dog enters the park and two or more dogs approach to greet. Many dogs are uncomfortable with this type of welcome. Some will receive it in a submissive manner, choosing to roll over, lower their head, submissively urinate etc. Others will just stand and tolerate it. Some will try to run away resulting in a chase and unfortunately a few will behave defensively, which could result in the new dog snarling, snapping, growling or even biting. As a courtesy, it is recommended that you recall your dog and temporarily distract him from the new dog.

This is most often likely to occur at the gate. Dogs do not like enclosed places. As such, the park itself, and the gate in particular, will promote territoriality. Please do not encourage your dogs to greet others at the gate, and please do not stand by the gate-**KEEP MOVING, DO NOT STAND IN ONE PLACE.**

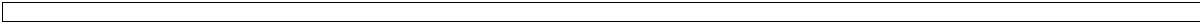
- **Humping** - For some dogs, humping is part of their play and mutually acceptable to owners. Some owners however are offended by this, more so than the dogs. If it is not mutually acceptable, do your best to separate the dogs. If the dogs return to each other to continue play, this may indicate they are both happy in their play.

Dogs hump for the following reasons; to mock behavior seen in other dogs, because it feels good, to gain higher ranking, due to hormonal responses and/or because it is self-rewarding or has been inadvertently rewarded by their owners. Some dogs may have hip problems and cannot cope with the added weight, therefore they react in an unpleasant manner. Regardless of the reason, humping can trigger unwanted behavior and again, as a courtesy, you should interrupt your dog's humping actions. You will notice that some dogs continue to hump (the air) even after they have been pulled off the other dog. This is because humping is involuntary, just as your heart beats.

- **Posturing** - Some dogs will stand tall over another dog always trying to keep their head over the other's body. Hackles or guard hairs may rise up between the shoulders and may even extend down their back. The tail may be stiff or may be wagging in short but fast left/right movement(jerky kind of movement or no movement at all, just straight and stiff). (wagging tails do not always mean happy tails!) The ears may be forward (confident) or may be back (fearful). Do NOT interfere with this communication. More often than not, human interference will result in the two dogs engaging in a fight that likely would not have happened otherwise. Stand back and happily call your dog away if you are uncomfortable with it. If you don't permit your dog the opportunity to establish himself and communicate with other dogs, you will leave him in a state of conflict whereas he will not know where he stands. If you interfere with this behaviour, you risk placing your dogs in conflict, and dogs in conflict are the most likely to fight. 'Alpha type' dogs NEVER have to fight. Lower ranking, submissive dogs will not fight and often, but not always, not even try defend themselves. Overall, most dogs really do not want to fight and the majority of conflicts rarely result in injury.

- **Smaller dogs being carried by their owners**- Simply put, it is like dangling bait. This usually results in dogs wanting to nip at the dog being carried. It is not recommended that you carry your dog.
- **Play biting** - This is a common form of play and is necessary. It helps puppies to establish a soft mouth. Adult dogs engage in play biting as well and most of our domestic socialized dogs will have a soft mouth and not result in any harm. If you are not comfortable with your dog engaged in acceptable play biting with another dog, that is unfortunate (for your dog) but it is your right to cease your dog's interaction and leave the park. Humans use their hands to touch, grab, feel etc. Dogs use their mouths.
- **Rejecting other dogs** - Barking, snarling, snapping, body movements, growling, raising lips etc are all forms of communication that dogs use to relay messages to others. A dog that is barking, snapping (the air but towards another dog) and or growling is communicating his demand that the other dog leave him alone. There is nothing wrong with communication. If you reprimand the dog for 'communicating' you are essentially teaching them to skip the talk and just engage physically(shoot first ask questions later). If your dog is being rejected or 'told off' by another dog, it should be your responsibility to call your dog away if YOU are uncomfortable with it. Your dog needs to learn to respect other dog's space and learn its boundaries. o

- **Finally, please continue to move in the park. Dogs standing still, with the owners will begin to feel more territorial about their area.**

**\*\*\* THE WORD AGGRESSION SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY \*\*\***

It is one of the most often misunderstood and incorrectly used words in the K9 vernacular. There are over a dozen types of aggression and this label is best left to experts in Canine Behavior to assess. If your dog endures an injury, as the result of an altercation with another dog, and it requires medical attention, it is your choice if you choose to report the incident to the City of Waterloo. **THIS IS A "USE AT YOUR OWN RISK" PARK-IF YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THE RISKS OF DOG INTERACTION, PLEASE RECONSIDER YOUR USE OF THE PARK.**

Suggestions or comments about this site: [dogerloo@sentex.net](mailto:dogerloo@sentex.net)

**Site last updated: 14-Jan-2005**

This site graciously hosted by:

