



Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

Jerry, a 4-year-old yellow lab, returns with a tennis ball in the Mitchell Park dog exercise area.



Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

Five dogs do a long sit during obedience trials July 25 at the Waukesha Kennel Club dog show. The dogs's owners left the arena for several minutes as the dogs remained sitting. Experts says that investing in training can create a strong bond between a dog and its owner.

A day at the park

Plenty of options available to get Fido exercise and find friends

By Kirsten Klahn
Special to The Freeman

BROOKFIELD — Looking for a fun place to take your four-legged friend? There are plenty of great places right in your backyard.

There are a number of dog exercise areas throughout the county, including Nashotah Park, W330-N5113 Highway C, Nashotah and Mukwonago Park's new addition, W325-S9925 Beulah Road, Mukwonago. There are also areas at Brookfield's Mitchell Park and Minooka Park in Waukesha.

There is no extra fee for the dog exercise areas, which are open the same hours as the parks, sunrise to 10 p.m. year-round.

But make sure you and your pet mind your manners.

First, it's important to keep in mind that not all dogs should be going to dog parks, said Khris Erickson a humane educator at the Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County, 701 Northview Road, Waukesha.

"If a dog doesn't socialize well, the worst thing you can do is bring them to a dog park," she said. "It can create aggression problems."

If your dog does do well at parks, however, there are a few key etiquette rules to follow.

Make sure your dog takes play breaks, Erickson said. Even if it's only for two to three seconds, it lets their adrenaline drop.

"You want to make sure you don't let them play nonstop," she said. "If they become overstimulated, a spat can break out. Just ask for a sit, or have your dog walk around for a few minutes."

It's also important to make sure you and your dog respect the other pets and owners at the park, said Heather Gehrke executive director of the Elmbrook Humane Society, 20950 Enterprise Ave., Brookfield.

"Make sure you're supervising your dog," Gehrke said. "Don't use this time as a

means to not be mindful of your pet. It's important to stay on top of what's going on."

If an area is fenced in, be careful when entering or leaving the park, she said. Otherwise, owners could be unintentionally letting other dogs out of the park. And, of course, always make sure you're cleaning up after your pet, Gehrke said.

Don't stand right by the dog park's entrance, either, Erickson said. Since it's a high-traffic area, a new dog entering the park can feel overwhelmed by a group of dogs playing by the entrance, possibly resulting in altercations.

And, leave prong or chain collars at home, Erickson said.

"A lot of dogs will grab on to collars when playing, and it's very dangerous with prong and chain collars," she said. "You then have a situation where two dogs are panicking, and that's not a safe thing."

When you go to a dog park, make sure you're in tune with your dog, Gehrke said. First, monitor the amount of exercise your dog is getting. If they're becoming tired or irritated, it may be time to call it a day, she said.

It's also important to understand that your dog doesn't always want to play with others, Gehrke said.

"Your dog can enjoy exercise and dog parks, but not want to play with dogs. They can use that time to explore and smell," she said.

Always check on municipalities' websites to ensure you're following city ordinances, Gehrke said. Know when it's time to leave, particularly if your dog is tired, starting to fight, or is being bullied.

It's also normal for your dog to not get along with every other dog, Gehrke said.

"Just like people, not everybody loves each other," she added. "We want our dogs to get along with everybody, but it isn't always the case, and that's OK."

Old dogs and new tricks

Dog training helps owner/pet relationship

By Jordyn Noennig
Special to the Freeman

Man's best friend deserves matchless treatment since it will be there for its owner through years to come, and getting a dog to be well behaved is in Fido's best interest, as well as his owner's.

Lisa Schmick from Best Paw Forward, 1005 Richards Road, Suite 5, Hartland, says that dog training is an important investment to make.

"When you think of how many years you will have your dog, you really want a good, well-mannered dog," Schmick said.

While it is common to think dog training means teaching dogs to understand basic "sit", "stand", and "walk" commands, dog training also includes many more lessons important for a happy dog.

Best Paw Forward offers a Puppy Kindergarten course where dogs are simply taught how to interact properly with others.

"It's important because when we take them (dogs) out of their litters they stop their social activity," Schmick said.

Steve Terwilliger from Waukesha-based Rogue Dog Training offers basic group obedience classes and said that it is "great for the socialization of pets."

Terwilliger also stresses the importance of correcting bad or aggressive behavior, citing his most common course is problem behavior correction.

"There's a statistic that shows almost all dogs in shelters have not received proper obedience training," Terwilliger said. "Being proactive and helping reduce chances of dogs being relinquished is why I do this."

Trainers encourage courses as fun bonding time for owners and their pets.

Trainers also emphasize the importance of positive reinforcement. Instead of training a dog with a harsh tone or a spank when it does something wrong, owners should reward it when he or she responds correctly to a command. When the dog is rewarded it is more likely to do that action again.

Other courses offered by Best Paw Forward include dog agility and sport classes. They also have courses to train dogs to be therapy pets.

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owners should reward it when he or she responds correctly to a command. When the dog is rewarded it is more likely to do that action again.

"You always want to reward with dogs," said Schmick.

Terwilliger also uses reward based training. He says that his training

involves reward giving or taking away and sometimes uses what he calls functional rewards.

"For example, I'll allow the dog to get closer to another dog on the street as a reward," Terwilliger said.

Both Terwilliger and Schmick say dog training is one of the best ways for a dog to create a strong relationship with its owner.

Resources

■ For Best Paw Forward go online to BestPawForward.net or call 262-369-3935.

■ For Rogue Dog Training go online to roguedogtraining.com, call 262-409-5901 or email Terwilliger at roguedogtraining@gmail.com.

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