

**Summary of Dog Off-leash Studies.  
Web address provided where applicable.**

1. **Study – Isaz 2003 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
[www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/CCAB/isaz2003.html](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/CCAB/isaz2003.html)

**Off Leash Dog Parks: What makes them Work? Page 5 of 34  
BY – Melissa Bain, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California**

Injury to people and other dogs was never observed during the visits, and was reported by Park managers to be of extremely low incidence.

**A Walk in the Park: An Ethnographic Account of an Interspecies Social  
Community.  
Page 29 of 34  
BY – Shelley Scott, Northwestern University**

In a yearlong ethnography of resident who bring their dogs to a neighborhood park in Evanston, Ill. a northern suburb of Chicago

The small park does not contain a designated dog area and people are frequently warned and occasionally fined by patrolling authorities who find them with dogs off leash. This does not deter the folks who live in the nearby houses and condos from meeting at the park because social time has become an essential part of the day for the neighbors and their dogs. In my research I have noted what the park-goers talk about regarding their dogs and other issues.

Taking dogs to Baker Park each day provides as much of a social outlet for many of the neighborhood residents as it does for the dogs. This paper details how human-animal relationships can enhance human-human encounters and how humans and dogs together may form a social community.

2. **Study – Golden Gate National Research**

**Suggestions of the Social Research Laboratory based on study**

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Limit off-leash dog walking to specific designated (not fenced) areas.

Cite only irresponsible dog owners.

Schedule specific times for off-leash walking

Create separate and/or fenced areas for off-leash dogs.

Create a licensing process for off leash dogs.

Fence environmentally sensitive areas to reduce environmental impact of off-leash dogs.

### **3. Eurobodalla Shire Council (Australia) Companion Animal Plan**

<http://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/Animals/brochures/CompanionAnimal.pdf>

#### **Page 4 Public Risk**

Concerns expressed about risks from dog attacks and Council's exposure to an unreasonable level of public liability claims. It is important to understand the reason why dogs won't necessarily behave in the same way in the neutral territory of a public park. Attacks on private property frequently occur when a dominant, protective or injured dog is not adequately supervised with children and visitors. These triggers are not present in the neutral territory of a public park when a dog is with its owner. Most data collected on this issue suggests that dog attacks are more likely to occur in and around the family home or another home.

#### **Page 10 Recognizing the benefits of Pet ownership**

The health and social benefits of owning pets are now well understood and have been documented in numerous scientific studies. At one level this means a balanced approach to managing domestic pets. At another more implicit level, there is an emerging understanding that pets contribute to quality of life, a positive that could perhaps be fostered by local government.

### **4. Establishing a dog Park In your community American Kennel Club**

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Dogs who are accustomed to playing with animals and people other than their owners are more likely to be well-socialized and react well toward strangers.

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The love people share for their dogs reaches beyond economic and social barriers and helps foster a sense of community.

Well-exercised dogs are better neighbors who are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively and destroy property. Their presence in the park along with their owners, also may help deter crime.

## **5. Meeting the Need: Providing Off-Leash Recreational Space in Santa Barbara**

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The benefits of dog ownership are becoming clearer as scientific attention is increasingly directed toward the human-animal bond. Dogs are now recognized not just for their physical and mental health benefits, but for their role as companions and catalysts for human social interaction, and in helping children learn responsibility (Annual Review of Public Health, 1996; Psychological Reports 1996) For many single and elderly people a dog not only provides companionship but often is the only source of home and personal security.

The link between off-leash recreation and promoting acceptable behavior from dogs. Dogs need to be properly socialized to be good “canine citizens” (Canine Behavior, 1965). They also need appropriate exercise to reduce boredom and pent up energy at home. Access to a park close to home is the safest and most effective way to ensure that owners socialize their dogs and provide them with on-going experiences in the outside world. This not only benefits the dog and its owner but also neighbors, other park and street users, and authorities responsible for urban animal management, all of whom are affected by unacceptable behavior from unsocialized and underexercised dogs.

Another reason dogs need access to public open space is for the positive effects on dog owners. Owning a dog encourages people to exercise, promoting physical and mental health. Taking a dog to a community park has also been found to stimulate social interaction with other people (Journal of Nutrition and the Elderly 1996). The community building that takes place in off-leash areas results in more cohesive neighborhoods, more local involvement in municipal affairs and a heightened sense of connectedness and community for all users.

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The final reason, of most benefit to urban managers and animal control departments, is that a balanced approach to accommodating dog owners in public open space results in higher levels of compliance with relevant laws by dog owners

## **6. Wikipedia**

### **ref- Pets and People the bonds Grow stronger.**

Off-leash dog areas provide a social setting in which people can gather and interact in friendship. Off-leash dog areas are places where dog owners and non-dog owners can delight in the entertaining and interesting interaction of dogs at play. Scientific studies have shown that people somehow find it easier to talk to each other with dogs as the

initial focus, breaking down the usual social barriers that make people in our society perceive others as “strangers”. Research has also shown that companion dogs improve people’s health and increase resistance to disease by providing pleasurable activity by providing a source of constancy in our changing lives.

## **7. PetNet**

**Prepared by Harlock Jackson Planning and Development Consultants in Association with Associate Professor Judith K. Blackshaw**  
**<http://www.petnet.com.au/openspace/frontis.html>**

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That dogs should be allowed access to public open space is a basic premise of this study. As a principle we believe it should be incorporated into both urban animal management strategies and open space/recreation plans. That is not to say that problems don’t exist, only that the benefits should outweigh the disadvantages and that there is considerable scope for the problems to be better managed.

Unduly restrictive access policies are inequitable and likely to be counter-productive in managing conflicts and varying demands.

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The benefits of allowing dogs access to public open space are not immediately clear and warrant closer examination. It is important to understand that they apply not only to dogs and their owners but also to the wider community as well as those responsible for urban animal management.

The most obvious reason why dogs need access to public open space is because of their popularity. Dog owners are a substantial group of park users.

The second reason has to do with its links with promoting acceptable behavior from dogs. Dogs need to be properly socialized in appropriate behavior. They also need regular outings to reduce boredom and pent up energy at home. Access to a park close to home is the safest and most effective way to ensure owners socialize their dogs and provide them with on-going experiences in the outside world. This not only benefits the dog and its owner but also neighbors who are effected by unacceptable behavior at home, other park and street users and authorities responsible for urban animal management.

The third reason why dogs need access to public open space is for the positive effects it can have on their owners. Owning a dog encourages people to exercise and visit their local park. Taking a dog out has also been found to stimulate social interaction with other humans.

## **8. Dog Park Scandals**

**BY Wendy van Kerkhove of Owner of Fresh Air Training**

**This whole article is relevant**

### **Summarization:**

Off-Leash parks give owners the opportunity to exercise their dogs in a manner that is hard to do under any other condition. Nothing beats playing with other dogs when it comes to getting a dog tired out. In addition, one cannot underestimate the importance of allowing a dog to continually practice his or her social skills. Yes, each one of us assumes some risk when taking our dog to a dog park, but in my opinion, the reward substantially outweighs the risk.

## **9. FirePaw Newsletter**

**The Foundation for Interdisciplinary Research And Education Promoting Animal Welfare**

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Dog play allows your puppy to learn his own language. A dog who knows how to communicate with other dogs is less likely to be afraid of them. Fear is the primary cause of aggression. Undersocialization is the primary cause of fear.

Frequent off-leash dog play throughout a dog's life is considered by behaviorists to be the first line of defense against fear and aggression in dogs.

## **10. The Bark Unleashed**

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**[www.thebark.comcommunity/advocacy\\_dogparks/dogparks\\_02.html](http://www.thebark.comcommunity/advocacy_dogparks/dogparks_02.html)**

**Jan Drago City of Seattle Councilmember**

Issued a position defining press release on October 9, 1995. As I listened to the concerns of these Seattle residents I thought back to the time when I served as a member and chair of a Park Board, when I developed a personal philosophy that ALL residents of a community had a right to utilize park facilities, not just SOME residents. Why not have some area where dog owners could exercise and play with their pets, socialize with other dog owners? I came to agree with what Seattle dog owners from all over this city were saying: **This is not a DOG issue it is a PEOPLE issue.** It is about recognizing off-leash activity a valid recreational activity. It is about Seattle residents who pay taxes to support our parks system, who willingly pay for those swimming pools, tennis courts and fields

that they may never use and who ask in return only that they be allowed in some places in some parks and to be able to engage in their favorite recreational activity. She then introduced legislation to implement Seattle's off-leash pilot program.

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John Etter, Parks Planning, Public Works Maintenance, Eugene, Or.

The trial period came to an end, and following public hearing, the decision was made to retain all five locations. Testimonials include the fact that people have moved into a neighborhood because of their existence, and that people derive enjoyment in sharing this activity with others; it is as if these locations are community centers for people as well as canines. There have been no complaints about people having failed to clean up after their dogs. Introducing a new activity to a park can bring out the kind of people you want in parks, which can help control some of the undesirable activity that may be taking place (in the park).

### **11. The Bark Unleashed**

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**[www.thebark.comcommunity/advocacy\\_dogparks/dogparks\\_03.html](http://www.thebark.comcommunity/advocacy_dogparks/dogparks_03.html)**

#### **Dee Tilson, East Bay Regional Park District Park Supervisor**

Dog fights are rare. In fact, there have been very few reported incidents involving fighting dogs in the last three years. Further, there has never been an incident resulting in litigation in the history of the special dog park of leash use since 1975 over a dog fight incident. The interactions between dogs and people have been very positive.

### **12. The Bark Unleashed**

#### **Interview with Dr. Nicholas Dodman Leading Animal Behaviorist and Veterinarian**

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The vast majority of dogs do benefit greatly from having exercise periods. And walking dogs on a leash is not sufficient exercise.

There's responsible pet ownership. But it is irresponsible behavior of the few that has made society make rules that are punitive for the many responsible owners. So it is not appropriate walk along Fifth Avenue with you dog off leash .

So whether it's continued petitioning to provide parks for dog owners, these things are necessary, considering how many dogs there are in the country. There are something like half as many dogs as there are cars. If you told car owners they could not park on the streets what would they do? So there is this massive problem. One in five people owns a dog, something like 40 percent of all American households have a pet. And to make a

rule that people can't exercise their dogs off leash might even be one of the reasons that we are seeing an increase in problems these days. The demographics of the human population is such that people are moving into the inner cities, we are becoming a nation of city dwellers, and in the city it is a concrete jungle, as Desmond Morris would say. Life is very bizarre for dogs who line in Manhattan. It is not at all like the natural life. A dog needs to be provided with natural outlets-being able to run and exercise and chase things and do what dogs were bred to do. Say you have an apartment –dwelling dog who has little or no exercise and is fed one of these high-energy foods. Then add to that that there isn't much communication because the owner took the dog to obedience training as a puppy and doesn't do it anymore. So now you have a dog that is neither is communicated with properly, nor has appropriate outlets or diet. This situation, which is all too common, is an accident looking for a place to happen.

### **13. Cal-Dog.com**

[http://www.caldog.org/off\\_leash.php](http://www.caldog.org/off_leash.php)

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Off-Leash recreation offers exercise for people and their dogs. The daily dog walk gives people a chance to exercise, to be out in nature, to meet with others and to create a community. Dog walkers find friends at off-leash parks; they also monitor each other and spread the word about courtesy, clean-up and control. A strong argument in favor of creating off-leash spaces is that availability of legal off-leash areas cuts down on illegal off-leash use, making dog averse people more comfortable in public spaces because there is less chance of encountering off-leash dogs in unauthorized places.

The National Parks & Recreation Service notes in its booklet, Planning Parks for Pets?: Designating an area where dog owners can allow their animals to run off-leash successfully remedies this problem in parks where the concept has been introduced. Violations of the leash law and subsequent public complaints have decreased; and dog owners have a place to legally exercise their pets.

Additional benefits of Off-Leash

Accommodate senior citizens and the disabled, who cannot always walk their dogs on leash.

Promote Pet behavioral socialization, making dogs safer around other dogs and people.

Discourage delinquent and criminal activity in city parks.

### **14. Better Health Channel**

[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/dog\\_walking\\_the\\_health\\_benefits](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/dog_walking_the_health_benefits)

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People who walk their dogs are seen by other people as friendly and approachable.

Stroking and patting a pet can reduce the physiological indicators of stress, including high blood pressure.

The non-judgmental companionship and unconditional love offered by pets is known to have considerable mental health benefits for owners including increased self-esteem.

Research taken by the University of Western Australia has found that owning a pet can also benefit the whole community. The researchers found that pet owners, in particular dog owners, were more likely to:

- Acknowledge and greet other people in the street
- Exchange favors with neighbors
- Meet others in their neighborhood.

**15. The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals****Statement to the City and County of SF Advisory Dogs Off-Leash Task Force****Page 2 of 5**

Perhaps most importantly, dogs also contribute to a more positive environment in our City by facilitating communication between people. Studies have found that the presence of a dog increases the likelihood of friendly contact. This is especially true and important for people with mobility problems or other special needs that keep them socially isolated. As one dog organization has noted, “neighbors who would otherwise have little reason to speak to one another will stop and chat when dogs are present” (SF Dog Owners Group SF DOG Managing Off-Leash Recreation in Urban Parks, March 1999 at P. 6) This fact is an important ingredient in the formation of a community. There are countless examples of dogs introducing people to other people, thus leading to the formation of neighborhood groups, park clean-up days, new friendships, and even marriage.

Dogs do so much good for the community: they give us a sense of optimism, safeguard us from depression and loneliness, and break down the barriers that isolate us from one another. Their presence improves our health, protects us from danger, and teaches us about caring and responsibility. While dog ownership may not be a fundamental right, it is unquestionable an integral aspect of our daily life – which cannot be dismissed lightly and should not suffer unwarranted limits.

Because dogs, like human beings are “pack” animals, they like us, need to socialize in order to remain psychologically healthy. Keeping dogs isolated from one another goes



against a dog's most basic instincts. In addition, if continually frustrated by their lack of mobility, many dogs will react with intense enthusiasm, such as dashing around wildly.

As noted by the San Francisco Dog Owners Group, "Dogs require daily exercise and contact with other dogs in order to remain healthy and well socialized...A well socialized dog learns the skills required for getting along with the people and the other dogs (he/she) meets each day (SF DOG Page 7).

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There is no substitute for off-leash parks: Dogs socialize with each other through subtle displays of posture and behavior that can only occur when they are not impeded by a leash. A leash limits a dog's natural movement and can even cause some dogs to become territorial, protecting the area to which the leash confines them" (SFDOG at P.7)

Moreover as the Task Force recognized, the twenty-year old park system does not reflect the distribution of dogs and dog owners in the City, nor does it reflect an apparent increase in dog ownership in the last twenty years (p.3)

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As stated in the Task Force Report, the current off-leash areas "are by and large, poorly marked, poorly maintained, and inadequate to meet the needs of dog owners" (p.8). Just as our park system as a whole has aged, the areas available to dog owners have aged along with it. In some cases, simple maintenance and signage will help to improve dog areas. In other, the availability of trash cans, waste bags and benches will lead to a more successful park.

## **16. P.E.I. Humane Society**

<http://www.peihumanesociety.com/park.htm>

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#### **The Benefits of a Dog Exercise & Education Park**

Research shows that dogs are more than just companions. They provide both physical and mental health benefits to their owners. The importance of dogs in society has even helped spawn a new field of study, Urban Animal Management, which aims to ensure that animals are taken care of in the urban environment.

Off-Leash recreational areas not only foster the strong historical relationship between dogs and people; they also contribute to urban animal management and urban environment.

#### **The Benefits of a Dog Exercise & Education Park to Dogs**

Studies have shown that dogs that exercise and are allowed to run freely are not as aggressive towards people as dogs that are under-exercised. Allowing dogs to have an off-leash area socializes dogs. It brings them in contact with other dogs and causes them to be less aggressive in each future encounter with dogs. Dog Parks improve the mental state of dogs. Many dog owners report that after a visit to the park their dog is less agitated, more relaxed and in general nicer to be around.

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### **The Benefits of a Dog Exercise & Education Park to Dog Owners**

The benefits enjoyed by dogs are also benefits to dog owners. A well adjusted, less aggressive dog is more enjoyable and easier to handle for the owner. In addition the Dog Park benefits owners research shows that these benefits include:

The provision of a vital public space allowing people to meet and form the bonds of community.

Allows people to have the pleasure of watching their dogs at play. Contributes to the overall physical fitness of people by encouraging them to exercise with their dogs. Provides an opportunity for owners to enjoy the outside.

### **The Benefits of a Dog Exercise & Education Park to Dog Owners**

By providing socialization and exercise opportunities, the Dog Park can make dogs less aggressive, thus reducing the risks of dog attacks. In addition, well-exercised puppies and dogs are less likely to create a nuisance by barking excessively or destroying property.

### **Benefits to the Community that do not rest on Dog Behavior.**

Designated spaces for dogs and their owners reduces the likelihood that dogs will be let loose in other recreational areas where they could infringe on the rights of other park users.

Dog owners have an interest in the safety of their community and can act as a neighborhood watch. Also designated off-leash spaces reduce the resources law enforcement and animal control officials must spend on enforcing leash laws, allowing of them to devote their time to other areas of crime prevention and animal cruelty investigations.

Dogs often help people break the ice, allowing people who share interests to socialize while exercising their dogs. These interactions help neighbors to get to know each other

and to build a sense of community. The social aspect of the off-leash spaces also tends to enforce the basic rules of dog ownership such as cleaning up after one's dog and always controlling one's dog behavior.