



## HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY

### Behavior Modification Handout

#### **Dog Parks: What You Should Do & What You Should Avoid Doing**

Dog parks can be great fun for you and your dog, however not all dogs may enjoy the experience. Make sure to do your research before going. Does your dog like people? Does your dog like other dogs? What is your dog's play style? Dog parks can be rough and tumble. Some dogs may find a dog park atmosphere too overwhelming and be frightened or anxious. You want exercise and play time with your dog to be fun and enjoyable for both of you. Having a plan to ensure a good time is had by all will be a good place to start.

#### **What You Should Do**

Introducing your dog to a dog park should be a gradual and thought out process. You want your dog's experience to be a positive one and with a little preparation you can increase the likelihood of that happening.

- Check out the park before you take your dog. Is it clean and well cared for? Is the park safe with secure fencing?
- What are the dogs and the people at the park like? Often dog parks are neighborhood activities and you often see the same people and dogs at the park at certain times.
- For your first dog park visit, take your dog during off peak hours when the park is less crowded.
- Stay for a short period of time (15 – 20 minutes) in the beginning and give him a chance to acclimate to all the activity.
- Let your dog have plenty of time to enter and if he seems afraid give him time to walk around on the outside of the park or around the parking lot. Always keep your dog on leash when not in the actual park area.
- Stay close to your dog so you can supervise his activity.
- It is important to remain aware. Keep an eye on your dog. Watch for other dogs that may be playing too rough.
- It is ok to let your dog run off and play but make sure he knows where you are and check in with him once in a while by calling him to you.
- Watch your dog for signs of over arousal and stress; he may be telling you he is ready to go home.
- Take a break if your dog seems to be getting over heated. Heat exhaustion is a very real danger to your dog. Stay in shaded areas.
- Pay attention!

### **What You Should Avoid Doing**

- Your dog's first outing to the dog park should not be when it is really busy.
- Don't overdo it. Three hours at the dog park is way too much excitement and arousal for your dog.
- Be careful taking food treats or toys to the dog park as this could cause a disagreement between dogs who don't like to share.
- Don't let your dog get rushed at the entrance. A new dog coming into the park is a very interesting thing and everyone will want to be there. Enter and lead your dog away from the gate and into an open area where he won't feel trapped.
- Dogs and people tend to huddle up in one area (picnic table, covered pavilion, water fountain). Stay out in the open with your dog and he will feel less stressed. Encourage him to walk around and play with you or other dogs he likes.
- Don't read a book. Play with your dog.
- Never leave your dog unattended in the dog park even if you are just running to the car for a second.
- If you have any doubt that your dog will get along well with other dogs DO NOT go to a dog park.
- If your dog is the nervous type and frightens easily DO NOT go to a dog park. Instead, take your dog to a state or county park where dogs must be kept on a leash and there is a lot more room to move around. You will be able to more easily control the environment and keep your dog feeling safe.