



No Bored DOGS

The Valley's Great Canine PARKS

by Danielle D'Adamo

Beginning in the early 1990s in the dog-friendly state of California, people desired a place for social interaction with their dogs and other pet owners. They petitioned for a special park for dogs to run off-leash without receiving tickets from police officers or disturbing neighbors and children at play. Dog parks ultimately provided a safe, enclosed area designed for off-leash activities and the opportunity to interact with other dogs.

"It gives them a chance to socialize with other dogs because it's their space," says Paul Mann, founder and CEO of Fetch! Pet Care. "They can tear it up as much as they want and it's perfectly acceptable."

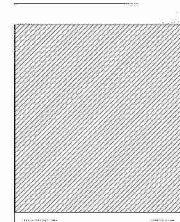
Regular outings such as visits to a dog park can help reduce boredom and pent-up energy at home. By allowing dogs to exercise and play freely, they're ultimately happy and healthy. The park provides pets and their owners time to play, but it also serves a wider purpose of bringing together dog-friendly people. Owners have the opportunity to make new friends and essentially bridge communities through a common interest.

Dog-Friendly and Green

The eco-friendly trend has made its mark on the way humans live and it was only a matter of time before the pet world started barking up the green tree. Dog parks are now using solar energy and green materials that make them more environmentally friendly. One local community made headlines as the first green dog park in Arizona and has received numerous praises since its inception. In their June 2008, *Dog Fancy Magazine* named Anthem's "Jackass Acres K-9 Korral" Dog Park America's Best Dog Park. So what's all the barking about?

Anthem's green story began with a group of dedicated pet lovers who formed Anthem Pets Inc., a non-profit animal welfare organization in September 2005. Anthem Pets then signed with Jackass Acres to lease land for a dog park and broke ground in August 2007.

Anthem Pets was determined to make an eco-friendly park without disturbing the desert landscape. Not a single cactus was removed—only fenced to protect dog's noses. The 2 1/2 acres of land was cleared by hand removing



only weeds. Decorative metal flowers made from recycled cars, wooden furniture built from fallen trees and recycled artificial turf help make this park green. Solar energy powers the water pump, electronic keypad entry system and mist systems that help keep people and pets cool. Even the doggie bags are bio-degradable!

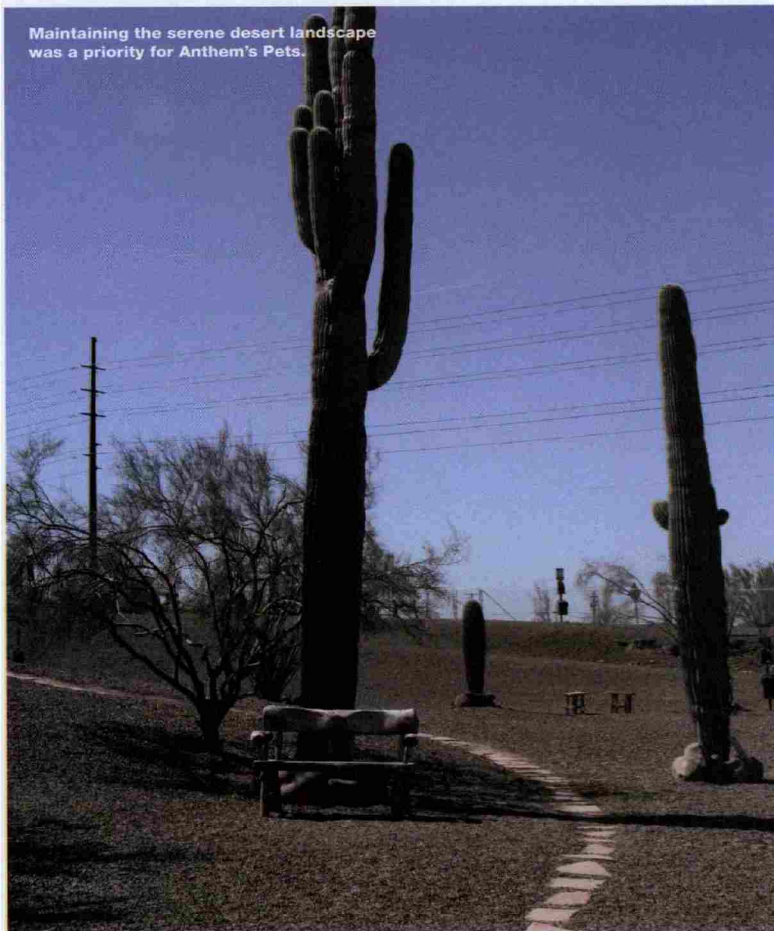
In a more controlled and upscale environment such as Anthem's dog park, private dog parks normally require a membership fee for the privilege of sharing the park. Dogs are closely supervised, carefully screened and rules are effectively enforced. Today, Anthem's dog park has a current membership of 600 households and 800 dogs. A great advantage to this privately owned green park is that all dogs wear a green collar tag to identify it as a member and ensure that vaccinations are current.

Man's Best Park

Diversity in terrain is an important aspect of building a successful dog park. All dogs don't have the same needs; for example, dogs such as Greyhounds need large open spaces. Dogs that are naturally water dogs, such as Golden Retrievers, need access to water to get proper exercise. So what is the best terrain for your pooch's paws?



Pet owners can exercise with their dogs on this extensive obstacle course.

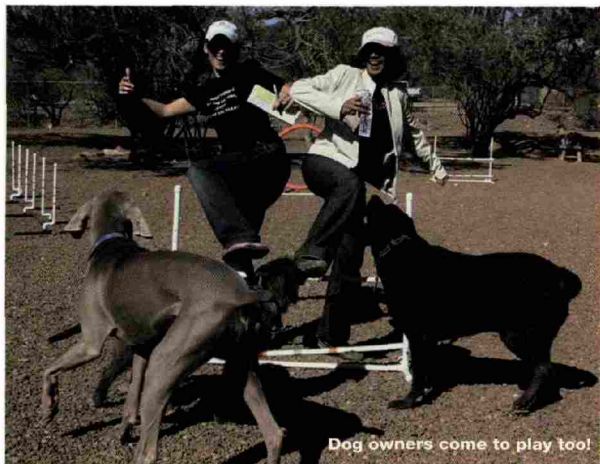


Maintaining the serene desert landscape was a priority for Anthem's Pets.

Dog Park Etiquette Tips:

- ✘ Dog park dogs should be friendly and have the ability to socialize without being overbearing or aggressive.
- ✘ Dogs should be able to respond well to basic commands such as "sit," "stay" and "come" so owners can get control of them if necessary.
- ✘ Barking should be kept at a reasonable level out of respect for neighbors around the park.
- ✘ Only healthy, vaccinated dogs should enter a park.
- ✘ Owners should limit the use of toys or treats as it may cause dogs to fight.
- ✘ Typically, puppies under the age of four months should not be allowed in a dog park because they're not fully immunized and can be traumatized by bigger dogs.
- ✘ Owners should be realistic about their own dog's potential as a park playmate ... it's not a place to fix a dog's behavior problems. They should be trained before entering a park.
- ✘ Get dogs off their leashes as soon as they enter because mixing a leashed and off-leash dog can cause stress.
- ✘ Owners should always be aware and should be supervising the dog's play.
- ✘ Owners should keep the dog-to-human ratio manageable and bring no more than two or three dogs per person.
- ✘ Owners should avoid disciplining other people's dogs.
- ✘ Owners should always clean up after their dogs.

Source: Fetch! Pet Care



Dog owners come to play too!

"Living in Arizona, a desert landscape such as compacted decomposed granite is something that is perfectly acceptable," says Gary Viscum, dog behavioral therapist and trainer with Bark Busters USA. "You don't want dirt that gets muddy or makes your dog excessively dusty when you bring him or her home."

Decomposed granite has the appearance of chunky, damp sand but does not absorb rain. Another plus is, granite doesn't retain the smell of dog urine. Wood chips or grass work well on flat surfaces, but grass is easily trampled on. Wood chips tend to scatter and it can be difficult to spot dog dung.

"It's really great to have something like mulch or wood chips so that it'll stay off the dog's paws and keep things as clean as possible for the owner," says Mann. "It also absorbs better."

Mulch works well for hilly terrains but it doesn't provide the most aesthetically pleasing landscape. It also absorbs urine and retains its odor. Artificial turf is occasionally used to make it easy to clean up and to cut down on maintenance costs. Some communities are even sporting urine-resistant grass or mixed areas of grass and dirt to offer better variety for the dogs.

Pet owners should also be aware of dog park amenities. Look for parks offering water fountains, training equipment, double-gated entrances and separate areas with independent entrances for small and large dogs. Some communities are focusing on more upscale features that include perks for the pet and owner.

"Here in Berkley, Calif., you can get your dog washed at the dog park and owners can have a latte while they wait," Mann says. "The whole point in offering these amenities is to really make it a social setting for both the owner and pet."

Avoid Etiquette Faux Paws

Amenities are important but safety should be the number one priority. Although dog parks are meant to be a social outing for everyone, it's easy for dogs and owners to forget their manners. Each park has its own rules to enforce and visitors/members are expected to follow them. Proper dog park etiquette can prevent trauma, frustration and vet bills if owners take heed.

Dog Park Dangers

People have raised valid concerns about dog parks in regard to the safety of mixing dogs. Anytime a dog encounters another dog, there is a risk of transmitting diseases. Both Viscum and Mann stress the importance of bringing healthy dogs to a dog park to avoid ticks, fleas or worms infecting park playmates.

Owners are also concerned about dogs fighting. When asked if a particular breed has a tendency to fight at dog parks, Viscum says that there may be preconceived notions about some breeds being dangerous—the Staffordshire Bull Terrier or Rottweilers, for example. "But it's my experience that those breeds are no more likely to cause trouble than a Golden Retriever," he says.

"Pit Bulls have gotten a really bad rap, and so have Rottweilers, Dobermans and even German Shepherds," says Mann. "That in no way means pet owners shouldn't take those breeds to the dog park. But, if a certain dog is aggressive toward kids or other dogs, then they shouldn't risk it."

The decision of whether to bring certain dogs to the park falls back on the owner. They should be on the lookout for warning signs and consider the pet's past interaction with other dogs before entering a park. Dogs can easily pick up aggressive and bad behavior from other dogs, including nipping, jumping and mouthing. If the owner sees any behavior that isn't desirable, it needs to be corrected.

The success with dog parks essentially comes down to the communal aspect: dog lovers bonding with their canine companions and engaging with fellow pet owners over a latte. Whether it's a modest, fenced-in plot of dirt or an extravagant acreage of doggie spas and swimming pools, pet owners should do their homework and research local dog parks to find the best fit for them and their dogs.

Visit these Valley dog parks:

- PETSMART Dog Park at Washington Park**
21st Avenue north of Maryland (between Bethany Home Road and Glendale Road)
- RJ Dog Park at Pecos Park**
48th Street and Pecos Parkway
- Echo Mountain Off Leash Area**
Grovers Basin on 20th Street at Cave Creek Road and Grovers
- Rose Mofford Sports Complex**
9833 N. 25th Avenue (north of Dunlap)
- Steele Indian School Park**
300 E. Indian School Road, in the northeast corner of the park
- Alta Vista Park**
1/2 mile north of Deer Valley Road at 107th Avenue
- Northern Horizon Park**
63rd Avenue and Northern Avenue
- West Chandler Bark Park**
250 S. Kyrene Road
- Papago Park**
College Avenue and Curry Road