



Prairie Pastures

Special Bulletin

Speak up for park safety

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Like most dog parks, Prairie Pastures is self-governing. We all need to do our part to create a culture of responsibility at our dog park.

Each of us needs to follow all of the rules all of the time. But this also means that sometimes we have to speak up and tell another dog owner that their Fido needs a time out, or needs to be removed from the park altogether, or to tell an owner they missed picking up Fido's poop.

Some of us are comfortable with this kind of communication. Others may be shy or feel intimidated when faced with these situations. Prairie Pastures Steering Committee is developing a safety program to help empower our members to feel more confident in dealing with these issues. And we invite

you to share your good ideas on how to handle these situations.

* How do you politely tell someone they missed picking up their dog's poop?

* What's a good way to tell someone you are concerned that their dog is being overly aggressive and should be removed from the dog park?

* If you see something that appears to be a potentially unsafe situation, such as a young child wandering without close adult supervision, what would you say or do?

There are a multitude of ways to deal with these issues; by sharing what works for each of us we all benefit.

Let's start the conversation. Dog park's work well when each user feels ownership and is prepared to be a leader in keeping our park clean, safe and peaceful.

Share your ideas with any of our committee members; or consider attending a meeting yourself.

If you want to take a more active role in park safety, please contact us for more information about our new safety program. Thru this new program we hope to empower members to speak up when faced with problems as well as to welcome park visitors.

Email us — We want to hear from you.
SENCinfo@gmail.com

What are your options?

What is the best way to handle a situation where someone isn't following the rules or if a fight breaks out?

Never put yourself or your dog in harms way. It is often best to move away from the area and then deal with it from a safe distance.

Consider speaking to the other owner, to explain the rule that is being broken. Most issues can be easily

resolved by calmly explaining our park rules.

If you don't feel comfortable speaking up or if the other owner won't hear you out, or in the event of really serious issues, please consider submitting a complaint which allows us to follow up on a situation as appropriate.

If you don't know the other people, do your best to describe them and/or their

dogs. Try to get license plate numbers or a description of their car.

If you do encounter a dangerous situation, you do have the option of calling the police — just as you would in any other public area. The police non-emergency number is **563.243.1458** — and of course, in the event of an emergency dial **911**.

Soaring Eagle Nature Center
Prairie Pastures Dog Park
3923 N. 3rd. St.
Clinton, IA 52732

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First Time Visitors

You can often identify first time visitors to the park just by how nervous they are. They might be the ones that won't let their dog off leash, or are constantly telling their dog "NO!". Or they are the ones that have brought in the sack lunch.

So what's the best way to start up a conversation? Talk to them! Ask

them if this is their first time to the park and go from there. Let them know that membership forms are at all the entrances. Tell them about our park, it's history, give them a tour, explain to them that our park is completely volunteer, from the daily up keep to paying the bills, all aspects of our park rely on donations of time and money. Encour-

age them to take their dog off leash, and tell them to just keep moving. That the best way to enjoy the park safety is by staying on the move – if they walk, their dog will follow.



Park Rules

- Membership badge or Day Pass required to enter park
- Keep the park clean. Pick up the poop.
- Handlers must be at least 16 years old, and must be with their dogs at all times.
- Children under 16 must always be under direct adult supervision; child's play is strictly prohibited. Children under 4 feet tall are not allowed in the park.
- NEVER leave a gate or door open.
- NOT ALLOWED: Females in heat. The average heat cycle lasts 21 days, during that entire time do not bring your female to the park.
- No large dogs in small dog yard.
- NOT ALLOWED: Alcohol, food, dog treats glass bottles. Children's toys, strollers, etc. Any form of metal or spike collars. Use of any tobacco products. Exception: tiny training treats are allowed, please use caution around other dogs.
- All dogs must be fully vaccinated for rabies, and in good health. Puppies must be over 4 months old. Dogs residing within Clinton city limits must be licensed.
- Owners are responsible for their dog's behavior at all times. Inappropriate behavior must be corrected immediately or the dog must be taken to another area or removed from the park. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to: dominance, aggression, posturing, bullying, pestering, barking, fence aggression, digging, humping. Owners exhibiting any form of animal cruelty will not be tolerated.

Is it ever okay to ignore the Rules?

It's never okay to ignore the rules, but we all have times when we bend them a bit.

Understanding the reasons behind the rules is important so that if you do decide to bend a rule you do so safely and while remaining considerate of others.

Some rules should never, EVER be broken. For example, a female in heat should NEVER be allowed in the park. No Exceptions! The reason? Even after she leaves the park her scent will be left behind and could cause other dogs to act out.

Bringing a female into the park while she's in heat is never fair to others because it puts others in danger — long after she's left the park,

But what if you and your dog are alone in the park and you've forgotten to remove their choke chain? Is that a rule you can bend?

All collars present a choking danger, and each owner needs to make that decision for their own dog. Our rule is in place so that your collar doesn't hurt someone else's dog. Just make sure that the collar is

always off well before another dog comes into view.

Most of our rules are meant to protect others — be considerate of others. Before you bend a rule think how others will be affected by your actions.



Start with the easy rules.....

Some of our rules should be easier to speak up about than others.

Like our No Smoking rule. Whenever you encounter anyone smoking in the park, just tell them—Sorry, but this is a non-smoking area. No need to explain.

Picking up poop is another rule that any of us should feel comfortable reminding people about. Just as-

sume they didn't see it happen; point it out to them or offer them a waste pickup bag. This shouldn't be new to anyone, all our local communities have waste pickup laws. And very often people just didn't see it — certainly that has happened to all of us at one time!

Other rules might be unique to a dog park, but still should be easy to

point out to people. Like no metal collars. If you see a dog with spike, pinch, choke or any form of metal collar, just ask them to remove it. Just explain that the metal collars are dangerous during play because they can easily get the dogs tangled.



Children in the dog park

The most frequent complaints we hear and the ones that seem to cause the most tension between members are about children in the park.

Parents that aren't familiar with dog parks don't understand the dangers. They may think their child is experienced with dogs, but they don't understand that not all dogs are good around children. There is also the danger of a child being knocked down and seriously injured by running dogs. Parents often aren't prepared to control both their dogs and their children.

So how do you tell a parent that the park isn't a safe place for their child?

First, you need to understand how dangerous it is for children. One of the reasons why we require that children be over 4 feet tall is to minimize the chances of them staring directly into a dog's face. Too often children walk right up to a dog's face and even

try to kiss them — that is dangerous with any dog, but especially dangerous at a dog park where dogs are often stressed, overly excited or not accustomed to being around children. And a running, squealing child could bring out a dog's prey drive and a child could easily be hurt.

The child's own dog could become extremely protective of the child, and could threaten other dogs that get close. Now the parent is faced with having to protect their child and control their dog — most don't have enough hands for all that!

Anyone that has spent much time at the park knows how easy it is to be knocked down. Running, playing, rough housing dogs can easily accidentally injure a child. Dogs leaping after Frisbees into the pond can easily knock a child into the water. Children should always be within arms length of their parent

— and parents need to constantly watch their children and their dog.

Explaining all this to parents isn't easy. So what should you do when you encounter a family with young children at the park.

Warn the parents of the dangers. Let them know the dogs are normally friendly but often high energy — perhaps even add that you once saw an unsuspecting tot get steamrolled by a clumsy but well-meaning pup. Try for an informative and helpful tone.

If the parents are receptive, then go on to explain our rules. If the parents are unwilling to follow the rules you can always ask them to leave the park — if you are uncomfortable with that you should consider moving to another area.

Join our Safety Program

This year we are launching an multi-faceted safety program designed to improve park safety and make for more enjoyable visits for all our members. This news bulletin is the kick-off for the program, and will be followed by more newsletters, improved signage, safety meetings, easier reporting of issues and quicker response to problems.

It is our goal to empower our members to speak out when they encoun-

ter problems and speak up when they see things that need to be changed. We will be offering T-shirts to our members that are dedicated to safety.

It is our hope that visitors will feel more comfortable asking for assistance from members wearing these shirts. We also expect that those that wear the shirts will feel more confident about speaking up to rule violators, and we also hope that

those violators will think twice before breaking rules in their presence.

To order a t-shirt and to join us on our mission towards improved park safety, please contact us at:

SENCinfo@gmail.com





*Offering Educational, Historical, Cultural,
and Recreational Opportunities to Our Community*

We're on the Web!
www.SENCinfo.com

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Contacting SENC – reporting issues

Comments, questions, complaints or compliments... should be directed to **SENCinfo@gmail.com** or messages can be left at **563.242.9088**.

Policies and procedures regarding dealing with complaints\incidents, along with a complaint form can be found in the brochure holders located at each entrance to the park and inside the main shelter of the dog park. Or contact us for a copy.

And if we don't have your email address – please consider providing it. It's a great way for us to get messages out to our members quickly and at no cost.

Email us at SENCinfo@gmail.com

Prairie Pastures Dog Park
A Branch of the Soaring Eagle Nature Center

Prairie Pastures Dog Park *Off-Leash Adventures!*



Showcase your STAR!

Here's your chance to show off your shining star and support our park all at the same time. With your donation of \$300 or more your best buddy's photo will grace the cover of our new brochure! (Good for one printing of at least 500 brochures.) Your dog's handsome face will help to introduce first time visitors to our park — You'll be the proud handler of a famous Park Ambassador!



Photos will need to be high resolution, must be taken at the park, and will need to display well vertically. We can arrange for a "photo shoot". Donations of less than \$300 will also be considered for inclusion within the brochure. For more information please email us at SENCinfo@gmail.com