



Fido Files: Dog Owner Pet Peeves

I was inspired to write this article on my way to work the other day when I noticed a note that had been posted on a mail box. This person was complaining about the huge amount of poop that was not being picked up in her neighbourhood. I began to get defensive (here we go, another dog-hater) when I noticed she also owned multiple dogs. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I also had my pet peeves toward dog owners (even though I own three large dogs myself). Here are my top pet peeves:

1. Not Scooping – I often wonder why a person decides not to scoop. Ok, so I can sympathize those few times in the dog park when your dog might wander out of site and you don't realize that they "used the little doggy's room". But, how do you explain the huge amount of neighbourhood poop? Are people just opening their front doors and letting their dogs go? Or, do they just feel that they are above the rest of us who DO scoop? Non-scoopers give us all a bad name. These few bad apples are why we lose more and more dog-friendly areas every day. For those who DO scoop – keep up the good work!
2. Small Children in Dog Parks – With the shrinking of dog-friendly areas in Calgary, why do people bring their small children to dog parks? There are not many places we can REALLY run our dogs, and they need good, rambunctious exercise to be good canine citizens outside of the off-leash areas. When dogs are at the dog park, they shouldn't have to worry about knocking little kids over in play – and parents need to ensure that their little ones are kept safe. I appreciate that walking the dog is fun family time. However, I respect your child's park by not bringing my dog, so please allow my dog to just be a dog in his space. The reality is that not ALL dogs are nice, and a lot of dogs are in homes without children so they are not used to the way little kids move and behave...some dogs just are not safe with kids. Save the family time for on-leash walks. AND, to the joggers and bike riders who are afraid of dogs – PLEASE DON'T EXERCIZE IN THE DOG PARK! (there are dogs there)
3. Aggressive Dogs in Dog Parks – Every dog park has that bully that makes everyone cringe. He starts all the fights and he has the dog owner that says "I swear, he never does that!" Dogs are not perfect – but odds are if you own a dog that is starting fights at the park, that he isn't likely all that comfortable at the park. Not to mention, all those dogs that ARE happy are having bad experiences that can lead to emotional problems in the future. Find a small group of fur-friends that your "bully" plays well with, and leave the dog parks for the other dogs.
4. Barking Dogs – Okay, this one confuses me more than anything. What makes a person think it's ok to put their dog outdoors, and allow them to bark all day/night long? There is a difference between dogs that bark in play (our dogs should be allowed to play bark, just as neighbourhood kids can shout in play), and dogs that bark out of frustration, loneliness, boredom and fear. Aside from it being extremely annoying to those of us that do not allow our dogs to bark, it's a sign that your dog needs some attention. I never understood the point of getting a dog, only to isolate it from the family and forget about it. If your dog barks continuously, it's a disturbance to the neighbourhood. No different, or less inconsiderate, than a loud stereo.



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5. Walking Dogs Off-Leash in On-Leash Areas – On-leash areas make up pretty much every part of the city, other than dog parks. For some, it's very nice to walk their dog off-leash... But, some people are fearful of dogs. It only takes one person to complain about a dog, and another law is created to repress our dogs. Also, some DOGS are fearful of dogs. Some dogs when on-leash feel especially insecure and sometimes act out when approached by an unleashed dog when they usually wouldn't. People have to consider that even though they might have lucked out and have an emotionally stable dog, not all dogs out there are perfect. Please keep your dogs on-leash in on-leash areas – for the safety of everyone concerned (including your dog).

With all this being said, you would think I am some sort of dog-hater myself. But, I am just the opposite. I am a firm believer that there are few bad dogs – just a few owners who don't live up to their responsibility of helping our communities to be dog-safe and dog-friendly. I work hard on a daily basis to ensure my dogs are under control, quiet, and picked up after. If we want this growing city to remain somewhat dog-friendly, we all have to do our part to give our dogs a good name to keep it that way!

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