

Doggie Day Care Benefits

Sometimes the question is asked intriguingly. "What an interesting idea, why would people send their dog to day care?" Sometimes the question is asked incredulously. "Why would anyone spend money for their dog to go to day care?" Whatever the motivation behind the question, people want to know why this phenomenon is popping up all over. There are as many answers to the question as there are dogs using the service.

The most common reason owners have for bringing their dog to day care is for socialization. Dogs were originally "pack-animals". They bonded to one another shortly after birth. They stayed together through their entire lives. But domesticating the dog changed its surroundings. It still has a social need to belong to a pack, but very few actually live in environments where this is feasible. Instead they live in urban areas, town homes, condos, apartments or even houses with postage stamp yards. Certainly not the ideal place for a group of dogs. Doggie day care fulfills the need to be around, and play with other canines. There are valuable lessons that they teach each other that they cannot learn from humans. One is "Doggie Hierarchy". Dogs have a Patriarchal system. Older dogs are revered and respected by younger ones. But just as in our society this is not instinctive, it is taught. But how is a young dog to learn such an important facet of doggie life if he is not around other dogs. It is the older, wiser dogs that pass this down to the younger pups, just as it was taught to them. The process of this teaching requires that the pup understand doggie language. Dogs grunt, snarl, snap, stiffen, raise their cockles, and many other body language signs to communicate to one another. But if dog is rarely around another and suddenly comes across one while on a walk with his owner, how is he to communicate or properly decipher what is being said. He can't. One of the biggest values I have seen in a day care situation is the teaching of "Doggie Language" between dogs. This is especially true for dogs taken away from their mothers at less than 12 weeks of age.

The second most common reason for dogs attending day care is because of the long hours they spend alone. Many of us work more than 40 hour weeks keeping our pooches in kibble. Add to that long commute times and time spent running errands and many of our beloved friends are alone more than 60% of their time. This can lead to boredom, separation anxiety, and developing bad habits, like chewing prized-possessions, barking, and indoor accidents. Quite a few dogs benefit from day care two or three times per week. They find that this new routine adds stimulation to an otherwise bored dog, and if the dog is not home, he can't very well chew the furniture or bark at the mailman.

The third most common reason for attendance is EXERCISE. Many breeds that now find themselves living in our neighborhoods were originally bred for working. Now instead of herding sheep, they sleep, eat, look out a window, eat, look out the back window, and to break-up the monotony: eat. The result of all this gluttony is overweight dogs. For large breed dogs such as Labradors and Shepherds too much weight can prove to be harmful to the joints. Attending a doggie day care that emphasizes exercise and daily walks is vital to the longevity of many breeds.

The growing popularity of doggie day cares in and around our cities indicates that they are meeting a vital need for owners and canines alike.

Written by Ana's Ark owner, Anneliese Johnson