



Small-Dog Owners

The Pooch Playground provides a separate area for small dogs 25 pounds or less. This area was funded from user donations so the “little guys” could have a safe portion of the park to call their own.

However, many owners of small dogs don’t use this separate area and instead let their small dogs run free with the large dogs. The most common reasons the owners give for doing this are:

- “My dog likes to play with large dogs.”
- “My dog is not afraid of anything.”
- “I want my small dog to learn to play with large dogs”
- “There aren’t any other small dogs here to play with.”



Your dog may be totally fearless and very used to playing with larger dogs, but this does not ensure that your small dog can safely play with unknown large dogs at the dog park.

Small dogs can be viewed as prey by larger dogs (who aren’t used to small dogs).

Small dogs can be run over by larger dogs playing hard.

Small dogs can be tripped over/kicked by humans who are not looking down.

Small dogs can be injured by the rough play they are engaging in.

The large dogs aren’t being “aggressive” or engaging in inappropriate behavior. They are just being dogs. Unfortunately, **small dogs are always the losers** when there is an encounter between large and small dogs. Picking up and carrying your small dog doesn’t guarantee safety because being elevated can either give a small dog a false sense of control because of the elevated position and close human backup, or entice other dogs to jump up at your dog for a closer sniff.

Many dog parks that didn’t originally have separate small dog areas have had to add them after a tragic incident in which a small dog was killed. Even if a small dog survives a bad encounter with a big dog, it may become insecure and anxious or become aggressive toward larger dogs. Your job is to protect your dog, so **please, don’t put your small dog at risk by letting him play with the big dogs.**

Unfortunately, we have had a small dog tragedy at Pooch Playground. In April 2008, a woman brought her long-haired Chihuahua into the large dog area. Although another park user suggested she use the small dog area, she insisted her dog would be fine. Before anyone realized what was happening, a German short-haired pointer saw the Chihuahua, chased it, grabbed it, and shook it. By the time other dog park users could intervene, the Chihuahua was severely injured and an emergency trip to a veterinarian couldn’t save it. Ask yourself how you would feel if your tiny best friend were killed and you could have prevented it?

OTHER INCIDENTS: In Danville, California, a 10-pound toy fox terrier was killed after colliding with a much larger border collie chasing a tennis ball.

Alameda, California opened its small-dog area after a 7 lb miniature pinscher was killed by a 95 pound Tibetan mastiff.

In Coventon, Kentucky, a Labrador retriever rushed a little Yorkshire terrier mix, picked it up and shook it. The Yorkies’ injuries were so severe that he had to be put to sleep.

At C-Bar-C-ParK in California, a Boston Terrier was attacked and killed by a larger dog trying to “play.”

In Illinois, two Akitas mauled a 12-pound Chihuahua mix resulting in \$5,000 in veterinarian bills.