

Small and/or Large Dogs

A Position Piece by Wiley Kulia

There is a growing controversy concerning small and large dogs, and whether they should be allowed to mingle. Although commingling is practiced in many homes across the Nation, unequally sized dogs generally do not share a common space in public areas, e.g., "Doggie parks".

Supporting the rationale to separate them is that most municipal dog parks have developed separate areas for canines that generally exist side by side: one for smaller dogs and another for larger dogs. Why do so? It's for the safety of the smaller animal. For example, the likelihood of serious injury to a Chihuahua resulting from a squabble with a German Shepherd is far more likely than a Chihuahua's fight with a Yorkshire.

Some will argue that it's not the dog's behavior that should be questioned, but that of the small dog's owner, i.e., it is the lack of the owner's ability to predict and detect their dog's errant behavior and take safety measures by pulling it away from danger.

By extension, there are also those who believe that the proper use of a leash may ameliorate the hazardous condition of a shared environment. This may be true, but a dog park is intended to allow a dog to run free and unhampered by restraints. The dog park permits animals to exercise, to expand their lungs, stretch their muscles, and meet other dogs of similar dimension.

Moreover, some see the dog park as a place for social gatherings; not for the dogs, but for dogs' owners. They walk their pets through the gate, unleash them, and join their human friends on the benches. Meanwhile, the dogs run freely and unattended.

Dogs are territorial! It is believed that dogs are more respectful of humans than tolerant of other dogs. Mix this ingredient with a small dog's tendency to "yap" (to bark in quick sharp bursts), and it creates a "perfect storm" for a dog attack. Due to the severity of the attack and fragility of the smaller dog, it can often lead to the intervention of a veterinarian, and even the death of the pint-sized pup.

Some breeds of dogs are notoriously vicious, and although the list provided here is not exhaustive, the following are cited as being among the ten most dangerous dogs and those that cause relatively more harm to their victims: Pitfalls, Rottweilers, Huskies, German Shepherds, and Chows.

Whatever our philosophy regarding the mingling of small and large dogs, essentially our goal should focus on the care and safety of our animals. Putting our dogs in harm's way is not in the best interest of our animal population, and demonstrates that the owner is shirking the responsibility he assumed when acquiring the pet.