

RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, AND BALANCE, Part I

A Position Piece by Jay Johnson

We often are heard using the three words: respect, responsibility, and balance in reference to our behavior as a pet club. What do these words mean to us, and how do we apply them to the Purple Paws Pet Club?

The word respect can mean anything from the act of appreciation to formal worship, but for our purposes, we define “respect” as this: “to show regard and consideration for.”

Our mission is to be energetic advocates and champions for the dogs, the cats, and the birds in Park Royale, and our intention is to respect them first of all.

Respect for our pets can take many forms, for example, we can help to make needed services available to our pets, like training for pets and pet owners, provide reduced cost grooming, basic veterinary needs, or discounted prices from local pet stores.

Another important way to respect our animal friends is to acknowledge their particular species as separate from our own. An example of this is to recognize that dogs are not our children or babies, although they sometimes feel that way. To take this parental position is to deny the value of a canine pet, whose special strengths can be blunted by our somewhat “helicopter mother” approach.

Your dog can be your best buddy without being your child. If you recognize his value as a beloved extra-species pet and treat him that way, he will respond in a proud canine way. The same is true of other species. We don’t love our pets despite their different species but because of it.

We also have regard for the pet owner, and if this is the way he interacts with his pet, then we respect that, and support his choice. We can do this in the same way that we wouldn’t recommend walking your dog on a long extension leash for safety reasons, but we would never say you can’t do it. It is your pet, and it is your decision.

We also want to consider respectfully those of our neighbors who don't prefer pets in their homes or on their property. You should know that the most common complaint from non-pet-owners about pets in our park is this: "They come on my property with their animals and use it without invitation or regard for my choices or my needs." That behavior, in my opinion, is not respectful.

Here is a good example of this challenge, where the home owner had to post a sign specifically denying other pet owners from bringing their dogs onto her property. She has a sick dog herself, whose weakness causes him to pick up disease easily from other dogs. To share her property with other dogs puts her own dog at great risk. It also puts other dogs in danger. Her position should be respected.

One way to respect anyone who does not want their home used by other pets is simply to stay off of that person's property. If you haven't been invited by a paw print in the window, don't go there.

Respect is easy to demonstrate, if you are willing to try.