



### Fertilizers, Pesticides, and Herbicides

All of these substances are dangerous to pets, although there are safer pesticide alternatives, such as Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) and corn gluten meal, says Dr. Stern. No matter what kind you use, store these out of your pet's reach, follow directions on the packaging, and keep your pet inside while applying them, as well as out of the areas where you have applied them for as long as is recommended by the manufacturer.



Talk to your veterinarian for more tips on keeping your pets safe in the garden.

*When not walking her cat on leash around their yard in Maine, freelance writer Stephanie Bouchard writes about pets and healthcare.*

### Plant Poisoning 101

Signs of toxic plant ingestion differ depending on which plant is ingested, says Dr. Stern. The most common signs are vomiting, diarrhea, depression of the central nervous system, and seizures. Severe cases can lead to liver failure, kidney failure, cardiovascular problems, and even death.



If you suspect your pet has consumed a poisonous plant, contact your veterinarian right away. You can also call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435** or the **Pet Poison Helpline at 855-764-7661** (a fee may be charged for either).

Check out ASPCA's lists of nontoxic and toxic plants online at [aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants](http://aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants).

# DOG PARK SAFETY

By *Andrea Vardaro Tucker, ELS*



*Before you and your canine companion hit the dog park this summer, read on for tips to help keep you both as safe as possible.*

Decide whether your dog is a good dog-park candidate. Consider his age and energy level; healthy, playful pups from 6 months to around 4 years of age usually do best at a dog park. If your dog is older, ask your veterinarian whether time at the dog park is appropriate. Your dog's enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for social interaction and energetic play may also give you a clue. Off-peak hours may be a better choice for some dogs.

Avoid the dog park if your dog is aggressive or fearful around other dogs or if your female dog is not spayed and is in heat. Your dog should also:

- **Be up-to-date on vaccines and parasite control** as recommended by your veterinarian (puppies need to be fully vaccinated before going to a dog park).
- **Have a current license and ID tags.** Microchipping is a good idea as well.
- **Already have been socialized** elsewhere; this goes for puppies too, who might benefit from puppy classes first.
- **Know and be responsive to basic commands**—especially “come,” “stay,” and “off”/“drop it.”

If your dog's the right fit, do some prep work:

- **Be aware of your responsibilities.** Unfortunately, not every trip to the dog park is “a walk in the park,” and bad things can happen. Local laws and even insurance rate-related consequences for bites, leash-law violations, and other less-than-desirable human or pet behavior may apply.
- **Be sure your dog has a quick-release/breakaway collar or a**

**harness** with ID tags on it (remove other gear, especially pinch or choke collars).

- **Pack supplies:** sunscreen for you and your dog, clean water, and your dog's own water bowl (but avoid taking toys or treats into the park).
- **Let your high-energy dog exercise at home** so he'll be calmer around his canine companions and focused on your behavior commands.
- **Leave children at home** to protect them from potential injury and so you can focus on your dog.

When you arrive, follow these etiquette tips:

- **Make sure the park looks safe and other dogs are playing nicely** before releasing your dog.
- **Follow all park rules**, including having your dog leashed in the parking lot but off-leash inside the park.
- **Have your dog stay in the appropriate section for his size** if the park is divided into large- and small-dog areas (even if your tiny dog acts like or enjoys playing with larger dogs, for instance).
- **Stay attentive and aware** of your dog (for example, avoid spending time on your phone or reading).
- **Help prevent heatstroke** in your dog by giving him access to shade and plenty of cool (not ice) water; also consider a shorter visit.
- **Always pick up** after your dog.

Turn to your vet for additional suggestions and to make sure your pup is as protected as possible from infectious diseases and parasites (also see page 2 for how to handle summer health risks).