

# Dumping dogs is like a death sentence

*By Arthur Hahn, Brenham Banner*

**We have three dogs. And every day about 6 p.m. they start staring at me.**

Why? Because it's time to go to the dog park.

Lacing up my cheap running shoes and putting on my St. Louis Cardinals baseball cap triggers a crescendo of barking.

Our dogs get to go there just about every day.

The smallest one, a Yorkie named Morgan, stands in the window and starts barking as soon as we make the turn into the entrance off Highway 36 North.

If you have dogs, you should take them there. It's a great place for them to socialize with other dogs, which are dedicated pack animals. They get to know each other. They make friends, in effect.

Dog-on-dog disagreements are extremely rare at the park. Dogs are much better than people about getting things worked out.

It usually takes them about two minutes to determine the hierarchy and social status, then they move past that and start chasing each other around just for the sheer joy of it.

Being at the dog park almost every day, you see things. You can pick out the responsible pet owners in a heartbeat.

They're not necessarily the ones doting on their dog, but they're keeping an eye on he/she all the time. And when a dog "does its business," they walk over to the nearest poop station and take care of it.

I've seen people standing there, watching their dog deposit some nuggets on the ground and just ignore the whole thing.

Not nice. Pick up your poop. It's on the rules posted at the entrance gate. And while you're at it, some of you might want to actually read the rules. They're there for a reason.

Stop bringing food to eat there. It's against the rules. Stay off the equipment. That's for the dogs. It's not a playground for your kids.

But they're not nearly as irresponsible as those people who bring a dog to the park and dump it there.

I've lost track of how many times it's happened since the park opened several years ago.

Just the other day, by the fence to the large park, was a pile of dog food. There was a 5-pound weight with a dog leash attached to it nearby.

No dog. It either got loose or the people up at Animal Friends of Washington County's Connie Clinic, which is located just in front of the dog park, saw it and took it in. They're really good about that.

And just last month, there was a pregnant female hanging around the front entrance, with cars whizzing by on Highway 36 a few feet away.

There was a shoulder haunch of meat with baling wire through it on the ground. And someone had brought a dog bowl and filled it with dry food.

I deduced that someone had brought the dog there and tethered it to the meat for a food source, but she'd gotten loose.

She was aggressive and bared her teeth at me when I tried to get close to see if I could help. The Connie Clinic personnel managed to catch her safely, although the clinic manager told me there had been some tense moments of near-biting.

Growing up in a rural environment, dogs that had been dumped were more common than I care to remember.

My dad had to "take care" of them when they wandered up to our house, emaciated and riddled with mange and fleas.

People may think they're doing a dog a favor, leaving it "out in the country" where they can live a carefree life in the woods.

It doesn't work that way — 99.99999 percent of those dogs are going to starve to death or come to some sort of other bad ending unless some human takes compassion on them. You're dooming that dog to a slow, painful death.

But you people who dump dogs on someone else know that, deep down, don't you?

And to do it anyway is one of the most inhumane things you can do to an animal.

But here's a happy dog park story.

One of the regulars told me that someone was there with their dog when they found a cat with its head stuck in the chain link fence that surrounds the park.

This kind soul decided he'd endure the scratches he thought were certain to come when he tried to extricate the cat.

But to his amazement, the cat remained still and then jumped into his arms when it was finally out. He swears it gave him a hug.

So he said to himself, as the story was told to me, "Well, looks like I have a cat now."

There's a special place in Heaven for people like that.

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