

DOGGONE RUN

What to do if you encounter a loose dog while exercising

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Whether you're a runner, biker, or rollerblader, few things will get your heart pumping more than turning a corner and suddenly being faced with a loose dog, heading right for you. This handout will help you put a plan of action in place BEFORE you encounter a loose dog, which will keep you calm and increase your chances of staying safe. **Even if you are a 'dog person,' always use caution when encountering a dog that you do not know!**

BE AWARE

Know your route. If there is a dog that regularly lunges at the fence, you may want to avoid that block, just in case it gets loose. You want to be able to hear a dog coming, so if you listen to music keep the volume low or only put your headphones in one ear.

STAY CALM

While you may be able to get away from a dog if you are on a bike or rollerblades, you will not be able to outrun a dog. Running away can also trigger a dog's natural instinct to chase off a threat or chase down prey. Stay still (but remember to breathe!). Adopt a relaxed stance and keep your shoulders loose. Avoid making any sudden movements.

'SPEAK' DOG

Dogs communicate with each other (and us) using body language, and you can use the same kinds of cues to help defuse a situation. Turn slightly away from the dog and do not look it directly in the eyes. Use calming signals (yawn or lick your lips) to 'tell' the dog that you are not looking for trouble. Pain, fear, or intimidation can easily turn a territorial dog into an aggressive one and can spur on an already aggressive dog, so do not attempt to strike at the dog or chase it off. Slowly back away from the dog until you are a safe distance away or until it loses interest and goes away.

PLAN AHEAD

If the dog comes at you, offer an item (e.g., jacket, water bottle). While the item distracts the dog, slowly find a place to take cover or move out of sight. You could also carry a dog deterrent such as Pet Corrector spray or a small air-horn, which can help to startle and stop a dog and give you extra time to get to safety. Pepper spray is an option, but be aware of your local laws regarding its use. (Be aware of wind conditions so that you do not accidentally spray yourself!) If the dog knocks you down, curl up into a ball. Bring your knees up to your chin to protect your chest and cup your hands on the back of your neck to help protect your face, head, ears and neck.

TREAT AND REPORT

If you are injured, flush any wounds with clean water and seek medical attention if necessary. If possible, get the contact info of the owner and ask if the dog is up to date on vaccinations. Call local animal control and let them know when and where the incident happened.