

How Tail Gate responds to injury and illness

Injuries

Injuries are not common at Tail Gate. But the fact is, sometimes a scratch or a puncture occurs.

As stated in our enrollment form, risks are present when dogs engage in group play. We believe the risk is much lower here than at the beach or the dog park, because of our controlled environment, our highly trained staff and its knowledge of dogs and their behaviors, and our vaccination requirements. We believe the benefits for the dog and its owner are well worth it!

It is Tail Gate's policy not to reimburse owners for injury or illness that occur. In addition, if your dog requires medical attention and we cannot reach you, we will take your dog to one of our partner vets and bill you for the cost associated with this visit.

Most injuries are minor and easily treated. That is not to say that we don't take them seriously. We try to learn and improve from every situation.

If an injury has occurred

The most important factor is communication, and we hope that we can keep it all as positive as possible.

We will always call you when we find that your dog has experienced an injury. We will describe the nature of the injury, what was done to treat it and ask you if you'd like any additional care or a visit to your vet.

How we minimize the risk of injuries

We never leave two or more dogs alone in a play area unless they are from the same family.

Staff members are not allowed to use their cell phones or otherwise to be distracted from their work.

We don't allow dogs in play who show patterns of unacceptable aggression.

We do not allow toys in group, as they can lead easily to aggression.

We separate dogs in playgroups based on their energy level and temperament. Size can be a factor as well, but some older, medium to large dogs prefer to be around smaller dogs.

We train our staff on behavior that is common for dogs, how to "read" canine body language and how to use that knowledge to prevent dogs from being injured.

How can a bite or scratch happen?

It is uncommon for one dog simply to be the aggressor and the other an innocent victim. One dog might snap at another, then the other retaliates, then another may jump in the mix – all in less than three seconds. This is part of pack behavior.

A bite or scratch can happen even when there is no fight or scuffle. They play with their teeth and nails and often do not intend to cause an injury.

Ears and areas on the body such as the lower leg can have very thin skin and can be very sensitive to play bites or scratches.

Other types of injuries

Limping may occur with dogs that are new to daycare and not used to the level of activity; older dogs for obvious reasons; and just bad old landing wrong during play.

"Happy tail" is when a dog wags its tail happily and forcefully and strikes it a hard object. It can result in an abrasion that continues to bleed due to continuous wagging.

"Kennel nose" can occur when a dog rubs its nose excessively, typically due to anxiety.

How is it possible that we haven't notified you of an injury?

Sometimes a scratch or minor bite can be under a dog's fur and very difficult to notice, especially if a dog does not show signs of pain, has long or layers of fur or matting, or never slows down during play.

If there has been a scuffle or if there are signs of pain, our staff will always check each dog for injuries. Otherwise, staff does not check each dog for injury each day.

Illness and other health conditions

When a child gets sick at school, you wouldn't blame the school. Children carry germs, and germs spread. It's a fact of life. The same is true for dogs in daycare. We take extensive precautions against illness occurring, including:

- Requiring several vaccinations;
- Using veterinarian-recommended cleaning products;
- Following thorough cleaning procedures;
- Maintaining a state-of-the-art HVAC system to circulate fresh air continuously into our facility. Our air-handling system brings in tons of fresh air throughout the day, and exhausts air to the outside.

Other dogs

We vigorously require ongoing proof of vaccinations for all dogs who enter our facility for any service, including for Canine Influenza (H3N2). We go well beyond what is required by state regulations.

Like humans, some dogs can carry an illness but not show any signs of it themselves, then pass it along to others. The owner may not even realize it themselves. This can be very challenging but is a reality with dogs.

We immediately remove any dog from play who shows signs of illness, contact its owner and get it to the vet immediately if necessary.

Your dog's immune system

Like humans, a dog can have a strong immune system and rarely get sick or have a weak one and be more prone to illness. Weak immune systems are more common in puppies and older dogs but they are entirely possible with dogs of any age. A weak immune system can be caused by factors such as diet, chemical deficiency, a thyroid problem, whether they are around other dogs often, age, and how much exercise they get.

Common health conditions

Canine cough – We do not often experience canine cough, but it is the most common health condition for dogs in group play.

Canine cough is spread by a dog coughing or sneezing. It typically lasts for a few days and goes away on its own. Rarely, medicine is required, but it's normally not seen as a major threat to a dog's health.

If you have a puppy, you should expect that it will get canine cough somehow, whether at the park, on a walk, from your building, or possibly at daycare. Once your puppy has gotten it, its immune system should help fight it more strongly in the future.

Giardia – This is a parasite found on surfaces or in soil, food or water that has been contaminated with feces from infected humans or animals. Symptoms are diarrhea and feces that smell worse than normal. It can be treated and cured with medicine, although some dogs can be giardia carriers.

Canine Papilloma Virus – This appears as pink growths on a dog's skin, frequently in the mouth. It is contagious.

CPV can be removed by a veterinarian. If you choose not to remove it, it will normally go away on its own, but this could take some time.

Like chicken pox for humans, once your dog gets CPV, it shouldn't get it again, at least any time soon.

In conclusion

Injuries and illness may occur whenever dogs play together. We at Tail Gate believe that the benefits dogs get from socialization and exercise with their own kind far outweigh the risks.