



A joyful youngster takes off at a gallop to greet a friend emerging from a car that has just pulled into the nearby parking lot. The pair tussle and race around the park for an hour or so, frequently distracted by the arrival of a new playmate or the opportunity to play a little ball. People from all over Lamorinda mingle and chat, some holding cups of coffee close to ward off the nip in the morning air. Shortly before 9:00am the call goes out, "Time to go!" The more obedient leave without complaint. Some, however, simply flop down on the ground and refuse to budge.



A Dog's Life

By Lee Borrowman



If you guessed kids or mules, you're getting warm. If you're a dog owner, chances are you know where and by whom this scene is played out, in infinite variation, nearly every reasonably dry morning and evening of the year. Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga is the place for your pooch to see and be seen by dozens of the playfully inclined.

David is at the park this morning with his 9-month old soccer-playing Fox Terrier, Bella.

"A handful of dog owners used to meet at this spot 30 years ago," he reminisces. "There have been a lot of changes to the park since then." Moraga Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram says, "Rancho Laguna is a de facto dog park; it's not really sanctioned by the Town but we haven't had any problems." Leash laws are enforced at Rancho Laguna from 9:00am to one hour before dusk or 7:00pm during Daylight Savings Time.

As parents of school-age children are often known as "Andrew's Mom," or "Isabel's Dad," so too do dog owners identify each other by their dogs. "If I run into someone at the store without their dog, I don't always recognize them," laughs David.

And just as not all people get along, neither do all dogs. But for the most part, there hasn't been much serious fighting, "We're self-selecting," David explains with a smile, "people with aggressive dogs are weeded out." You're probably more at risk from a rambunctious canine who may smell a doggie treat hidden in your pocket: "You learn to bend your knees," he laughs, "in case you get hit." Among park-goers there is a general consensus that most of the dogs and people at Rancho Laguna are well-behaved and there are very few problems.

Ingram says the Public Works department has not received many complaints. "People are really good about following the rules, obeying the leash laws and picking up after their pets. We've had a few complaints about dogs being off-

leash during the day and helping themselves to picnic fare that doesn't belong to them...the guys that mow the lawn are not wild about tennis balls being left in the grass; they have to pick them up or they go flying when mowed over!"

Lafayette resident Susie, whose striking black Giant Schnauzer Callie-Elizabeth sports a snazzy red collar and plays around with a frisbee, agrees that everyone gets along very well. If someone forgets to bring a plastic bag, "we're good at sharing," she says. There are no bag dispensers at the park because Public Works doesn't have sufficient staff to maintain them. "We tried it at the Commons," said Ingram, "we asked people to donate bags, but most of the time the PVC pipe 'dispenser' was empty, and often the bags were just blowing around the park."

Susie only learned about the dog park early last summer. "I was walking at the Reservoir, and somebody mentioned it." She doesn't mind the fifteen minute drive to Moraga, but says, "It would be nice if we had a dog park in Lafayette. I hear rumors every now and then, but nothing ever happens."

There is, in fact, a group of dog owners in Lafayette who are trying to establish a dog park. There are some serious obstacles in their path, both financial and political, but they have been seeking support through public outreach – you may have seen their booth at the Lafayette Art and Wine Festival. For more information, check out their website at www.lafayettedog.org. This site also offers some valuable tips on dog park etiquette.

Rancho Laguna Park is located at the end of Camino Pablo in Moraga (watch for the new speed bumps on your way).

Rancho Laguna Park Only
 PETS MUST BE ON A LEASH AND UNDER CONTROL AFTER 9 A.M. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BEING OFF LEASH 1 HOUR BEFORE DUSK DURING STANDARD TIME AND AFTER 7 P.M. DURING DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME.
 DOGS NOT ALLOWED IN TOT LOT AREAS.
 Dog leash policy posted at Rancho Laguna



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