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## Petting Concerns

### The DOGPAW board's suggestions for easing coronavirus worries

(The DOGPAW board continues to hear from park visitors who fear that the coronavirus can be passed on when other people pet their dogs--and who ask that the organization take steps to stop this. The following is the response from board President Eileen Cervantes.)

After a very lively exchange, the DOGPAW board of directors finally came to the conclusion that the organization cannot mandate that people do not pet others' dogs. First, we cannot police it; even if we could, there are no laws against it, so there would be no penalty or punishment that we could give. This would further diminish our standing of authority.

Second, by giving a statement that the virus could be passed along through the dogs' coats, we come perilously close to giving medical advice, and there has been no official notice from authorities.

Please know that we DO understand the concerns. Here are some of the suggestions from board members and others:

1. Wipe the dog with a sanitizing wipe or give a bath after being at the park, if someone has touched the dog.
2. Put a "do not touch" sign on the dog.
3. Go to the park only when it is either relatively empty or stick close (six feet, of course!) with friends.
4. Keep the dog close. Many people stay in one place while their dog(s) run amuck. Walking with the dog, and continually calling the dog close, promotes health for both human and canine, but also makes a stronger bond with the dog.

We know this will not fully address everyone's concerns, but under the current circumstances it's the best we can offer. (I already happen to use 1, 3, and 4. I also use sanitizing wipes on gate latches and waste handles, as well as on my car—especially the steering wheel.)

Now that the State of Washington is starting to open again, we will see more people outside. This creates an even more hazardous situation for those of us with co-morbidity factors. I personally will have to be even more vigilant. Because more people will be out, I will go out even less so as to avoid coming in contact with others.

## A New Gold Partner



### **Bear Prairie Kennels**

Tucked into the farms, fields, and forests just north of Washougal, Bear Prairie Kennels offers its four-legged guests a quiet, pleasant place to stay whenever their owners have to leave.

And even with the travel restrictions imposed to deal with a virus outbreak, the kennel is happily serving as a dog's home away from home, according to co-owner Suz Barratt, who had one of her guests sitting on her lap when DOGPAW called.

"We're pretty much brand new, and we had a great start," she said. "Before the shelter-in-place order, we had more reservations than ever before."

Then, understandably, all but a few had to cancel. But we've still got a few trickling through. It's been great, and our guests are happy, which is the most important thing."

Emergency responders, health care staffers, and other essential workers have brought their dogs to Bear Prairie Kennels while putting in longer shifts, Barratt said, and some dog owners have brought their pets in while taking advantage of the long quarantine to tackle big projects at home.

Bear Prairie Kennels opened just last summer, but Suz and Tyler Barratt are lifetime dog-lovers who own dogs themselves. Suz was a frequent pet-sitter growing up and is a longtime volunteer at the West Columbia Gorge Humane Society in the dog shelter. "I've been involved with dogs for as long as I can remember," Suz Barratt said.

Bear Prairie Kennels, she said, is proud to support DOGPAW's four off-leash parks, and pleased to gain the added exposure in places tailored to serve the same people the kennel does. "We're excited about this exposure at the parks," she said. "We know there are more people who know about us now."

Dog lovers at heart, the Barratts have gotten used to saying farewell to their short-term guests when the owners come to pick them up. They find their reward in the eager reception the dogs give their people when they're all reunited, Suz Barratt said. The best is when the dogs are so excited to be back for another visit.

"I'm happy that they're happy, and you know that you're going to see them again," she said. "And then you go home to your own dogs, and you smother them with love."

Bear Prairie Kennels  
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**DOGPAW OFF-LEASH DOG PARK LOCATIONS:**

**Dakota:** 1515 N.E. 164th Ave. Vancouver, WA  
**Ike (Ross):** 5167 N.E. 15th Ave. Vancouver, WA  
**Kane:** 10910 N.E. 172nd Ave. Vancouver, WA  
**Lucky:** 10100 N.E. 149th St. Brush Prairie, WA

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