



Feb. 22 is Walk your Dog Day

Your pooch may think every day holds this distinction, but it comes only once a year. So leash up. Don't disappoint.

By Sally Mesarosh

Quick, it's time to hit the "paws" button and take your dog for a walk. Feb. 22 is Walking the Dog Day, observed annually around the world.

Whether you venture forth to a dog park, a hiking trail or just across the backyard, the fresh air, exercise and socialization are good for both humans and hounds, say veterinarians.

Dr. Kimberly Focht, DVM, the Program Director of Veterinary Technology at Mesa Community College, said it's a tossup as to who gets the most out of Walking the Dog Day.

"Dogs enjoy many of the same

health benefits of walking as their owners," Focht said.

"At Mesa Community College's Veterinary Technology program, the students get outside and walk our resident teaching dogs twice a day, seven days a week. This makes for happier pups and students."

Focht believes that getting out and walking with your dog, even 5-10 minutes a day, can improve its behavior and give it the mental stimulation that all dogs crave.

Focht's top dog walking tips

- Make sure to have a sturdy leash and collar or harness for your pet to

prevent it from accidentally getting away.

In the event they do escape from you, it is important for them to have identification on their collar or a microchip to help them be returned to you.

- If you find your dog to be unruly when on lead, invest in their and your relationship by attending obedience classes.

- Be sure to keep your pet up to date on vaccines and preventative care to keep them safe and healthy while enjoying the outdoors.

As for humans, walking a pet has been shown to boost the immune system and reduce blood pressure.

A long walk with a friendly companion is a natural way to calm frayed nerves and put things in perspective.

It's much easier to find motivation and stick with an exercise plan if there's an eager mutt reminding you that it's "time."

Janet Rosenkrantz, a West Chandler resident and owner of two dogs, Kea, 3, and Duby, 15, said walking her dogs makes her feel like a good dog owner.

"When I get the leash, they're the happiest they've ever been in their lives," she said.

"Dogs are built for walking. It's their natural state of being."

Where are the best places for romping?

The city of Tempe has five dog parks, including Papago Park, Jaycee Park, Creamery Park, Mitchell Park and Tempe Sports Complex.

Dog park rules state that dogs must be licensed, vaccinated and wear a visible and current license.

Oh, and don't forget the plastic bags for "pick-up" duties.

Pet owners can find a map of dog park locations at: <http://www.tempe.gov/city-hall/community-services/parks/dog-parks>.

Perhaps the most important advice when stopping by these parks is to practice "unconditional consideration of your fellow pet owners."

Also, as summer approaches, take precautions that your dog does not overheat.

Rosenkrantz said she is looking forward to celebrating Walking the Dog Day by taking her pooches for a long walk. "Remember," she said, "A tired dog is a good dog."



City of Tempe

Saturday, Feb. 25

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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