



## Tips on navigating life with a pooch in New York City

### Part one of a two-part series on dog and cat care in an urban center

transportation are just a few of the living conditions New Yorkers face every day. Throw a dog or puppy into the mix and NYC living can get complicated. Luckily, being an urban pet parent doesn't have to be stressful. With an estimated 1.7 million dogs living in the Big Apple, plenty of dog owners have found ways to thrive in the city.

#### Let's Get Physical

Given that most New Yorkers don't have yards, taking your dog to public parks and on neighborhood walks can be imperative to your dog's health and happiness. While it's best for your dog to get outside as often as possible (up to three times a day), the good news is, there are lots of public areas perfect for your pooch to run off his or her energy. Dog runs – large, fenced-in areas for dogs to exercise unleashed – are on the rise in the city's public parks. Created in collaboration between the New York Parks Department and dog-loving volunteers, dog runs supply good drainage, safe lighting, and healthy plantings so your dog's play time can be worry free.

Another option for off-peak hours only are designated off-leash areas. Certain park areas allow dogs to be off-leash from the time the park opens until 9 a.m. and from 9 p.m. until the park closes. "It's important for dog owners to follow rules at all times in these areas, which includes keeping your dog under control and carrying proof of your dog's license and rabies



While New York City is likely one of the greatest cities in the world, the large urban center comes with a unique set of living challenges. Tight quarters and sky-high costs, along with crowded sidewalks, roads, and public trans-

portation are just a few of the living conditions New Yorkers face every day. Throw a dog or puppy into the mix and NYC living can get complicated. Luckily, being an urban pet parent doesn't have to be stressful. With an estimated 1.7 million dogs living in the Big Apple, plenty of dog owners have found ways to thrive in the city.

vaccination," says Dr. Jillian Pagano, DVM of West Chelsea Veterinary.

To find dog run and off-leash locations in your neighborhood, visit:

[nycgovparks.org/facilities/dogruns](http://nycgovparks.org/facilities/dogruns)

#### Street Smarts

Busy city streets can sometimes seem overwhelming, with everything from garbage to construction and even strollers acting as road blocks for your furry friend. In order to navigate the many distracting sights and sounds associated with an urban center, a well-trained city dog should be able to follow a few simple commands, such as "Sit-Stay," "Heel," "Leave It" and "Come."

"These commands will keep your dog out of traffic, away from off-limit items and from both-ering strangers who may dislike or be afraid of dogs," notes Dr. Pagano. "Also, for the safety of your dog, yourself, and those around you, it's best to keep your dog's leash to six feet or less when on public sidewalks. If you're struggling to master these commands with your dog, you're

not alone. West Chelsea Veterinary can recommend several highly-regarded obedience classes and/or behavior specialists in your area to help."

Also, while it can be tempting to have your dog join you while running errands, it's best to think ahead about whether your destination(s) will accommodate dogs. Tying your dog to a post or parking meter while in a restaurant or store may put your dog in a vulnerable position, opening him or her to unwanted attention from other dogs, teasing by strangers, or even possible theft. When in doubt, it's best to leave your pooch at home.

#### Living in the Sky

Lack of space isn't the only challenge to overcome when caring for a dog in a high-rise or city apartment building. Proper social etiquette weighs heavily on your duties as an urban dog owner too. Just like busy city streets, lobbies and elevators can be places where temptations abound. Keep your dog under control when indoors by walking briskly through crowded lobbies and sitting your dog in the far corner while riding elevators.

While most apartment dwellers understand an occasional bark or two, persistent barking may cause tension between you and your neighbors. If your dog barks throughout the day, you may want to confine him or her to an area of the apartment away from hallway noise and activity. You may also consider providing your dog with a hollow treat stuffed with a favorite food. Your dog will work hard to get to the tasty delight (without much success!), which may tire him or her out and distract from surrounding noises.

## Public Health Issues to Watch

With urban centers often comes a high prevalence of bug, viral and parasitic activity, some of which could potentially affect your dog. Bed bugs have become a growing concern for New Yorkers over the last number of years. While bed bugs cannot live on pets as their host, dogs, like humans, can be bitten by bed bugs. If you suspect bed bugs, check your pet's most sensitive areas such as the stomach for little red bumps. If working to rid your apartment of bed bugs, it's best to find an alternative place for your dog to stay during the extermination process.

Rabies is a viral disease that infects the central nervous system of mammals. While all dogs in New York

City are required by law to receive a rabies vaccination, if you suspect your dog has been bitten by a rabies-infected animal such as a raccoon, skunk, or bat, call the Animal Bite Unit at 212-676-2483 (or if after hours the Poison Control Center at 212-764-7667) to report the bite.

Lyme Disease, and other tick borne diseases, such as Ehrlichia and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever were first reported in city dogs in 1984. Unfortunately, tick bites have become more of an issue in the city than in previous decades, making it more likely for your pets to be at risk. In dogs, Lyme disease causes symptoms common of arthritis, but can also affect the heart, nervous



system and kidneys. Look for sudden and perhaps painful lameness that may shift from one leg to another.

For more information on pets and city living, please contact West Chelsea Veterinary at (212) 645-2767 or visit us online at [www.WestChelseaVet.com](http://www.WestChelseaVet.com)