



D.A.W.G.
DOG ADVISORY WORK GROUP

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DFA (Dog Friendly Area) Surfacing - Research Summary:

Based on our ongoing research, we continue to conclude that there is no **PERFECT** surface solution for Chicago area DFA's. And although there is a wide-range of opinions, priorities and concerns, we believe that surfacing considerations should be addressed as follows:

What's best for the greater good of the majority of park users, and what's reasonably best for most animals.

DFAs are NOT the sole "be-all/ end-all" solution in addressing a dog's needs for exercise, recreation and socialization in a controlled environment. These separate areas have traditionally been established as a proactive way to address community conflicts and concerns, and as a compromise in alleviating pressure and social stress among competing recreational needs. Ultimately, dog guardians are responsible for overseeing any environment that they use, and should ideally cross-train and exercise their dogs in various environments to meet these specific needs.

According to D.A.W.G. (and "Wiggly Field") Advisors **Sue Ferraro, DVM**, Lincoln Park Dog & Cat Clinic, and **Rae Ann Van Pelt, DVM**, Family Pet Animal Hospital, the CVMA (Chicago Veterinary Medical Association), as an organization, will not dictate or recommend ONE specific, preferred surface; each vet has their own preferences and will give their own recommendations. But based on all factors which must be considered when addressing DFA surfaces, both Dr. Ferraro and Dr. Van Pelt (along with *their* advisors) agree that **hard-surfacing** (asphalt or concrete) is currently the most desirable solution in our Chicago DFA's.

We further recommend that this hard ("Runner's") Asphalt surface be "coated" with a layer of lighter paint, which is necessary to deflect heat, especially during the summer months (otherwise the area will heat up quickly and not be safe or comfortable for humans or dogs). This surface should be "Power-Washed" (high-pressure water cleaning) a minimum of four times per year. In addition, DFA's should also have separate "elimination" areas, which could contain pea-gravel. Since these are smaller, contained areas within the DFA, they are easier to maintain and clean. Appropriate drainage **MUST** be provided in pea-gravelled areas, and the area must be raked and disinfected on a regular basis. In addition, the gravel must be *completely* removed and replaced regularly. *Sponsoring Dog Guardian Groups should have a local veterinarian conduct quarterly soil (pea-gravel) sample tests, to check for parasites/contamination.

Surfacing ISSUES/CONCERNS:

Chicago's approach in addressing DFA's is unique; We are at the forefront in addressing health issues and concerns-

PRIORITY: Infectious Disease Control; PREVENTION of Parasite transmission

- 1) **Health and Safety to Humans**
- 2) **Health and Safety to Dogs**

Other considerations (no particular order - all are important):

- **Initial cost and labor**
- **Chicago's climate/weather conditions**
- **Usage** (most of our DFAs are heavily utilized; large numbers of dogs are regularly using these areas, many come from *outside* of the community).
- **Odor control** (especially during warmer months!)
- **DFAs are Public Spaces:**
- **Ongoing, long-term maintenance**
- **Volunteer commitment, maintenance**
- **Small size of areas** (most Chicago DFA's are under 1/2 acre in size).
- **Aesthetics**

Currently, there are no enforceable control methods to limit who, or how *many* dogs can be in these areas at any given time ("maximum capacity" limitations); we are incapable of *ensuring* that *all* dogs using these areas are in good health.

Physical Effects on dogs:

***Osteoarthritis: Surfacing is not a primary contributing factor**

There are NUMEROUS factors that contribute to osteoarthritis: Genetics, weight management, skeletal confirmation, predisposition to joint/hip problems, other types of joint-jarring exercises and activities.

• **HARD RUNNING:** Ideally should be done on-leash, on grass.

• **Dogs' activities while at a DFA:** Most dogs are NOT running non-stop while in these areas:

(*"Run, stop, turn, watch, sniff, bark, run, chase, wrestle, stop, drink, eliminate, watch, sniff, run, stop, etc"!*)



