

Thinking about doggy daycare for your pup? Your first step is to do your research

Doggy Daycare is a great option for many dogs. Good daycare gives dogs great socialisation, exercise and mental stimulation, while their owners are out. You can come home knowing your dog is happily tired and relaxed, instead of having been lonely, bored or up to mischief.

But not all daycares are the same and you need to ensure that the one you choose is right for your dog and right for you.

Sending your dog to daycare is similar to kids going to kindergarten, so even at the best run daycares it is possible your dog could get nipped by another dog in play or pick up a "bug". All dogs accepted at any daycare should be fully vaccinated, including for canine cough, but just like humans get colds and flu, dogs can still catch bugs and colds. What matters is the policies and procedures the daycare has in place to minimise the risks and maximise the benefits of daycare for your dog.

Here is a list of questions to ask a daycare facility to make sure it's a safe place for your dog.

TOP 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK A DAYCARE FACILITY

(The responses in blue are Nose2tail's answers)

1. Are the dogs split into groups, or are they all in together? How are they grouped (by age, size, activity level)?
At Nose2tail, we split the dogs into playgroups depending on their size, age, play style and temperament.
2. What type of training does the day care staff have (dog behaviour, CPR, first aid)?
All Nose2tail staff undergo a competency based training in dog behaviour and management. They are also Pet CPR and First Aid trained.
3. What is the staff to dog ratio?
Roughly 1:15
4. What methods are used to manage dog behaviour within the group?
At Nose2tail we only use positive reinforcement to manage the dogs. We never use physical discipline, tethering of dogs or electric shock collars.

5. What type of play are dogs allowed to engage in?

Their day will consist of playing with each other, with toys and interaction with the staff. During inside time all toys are away, the radio is on and the dogs are encouraged to go to their bed. This ensures the dogs have a good balance of energetic play and down-time so they don't become over-stimulated and stressed.

6. What is the procedure if there's a medical emergency?

We haven't had many medical emergencies at Nose2tail, but what we do is try to contact the owner. However as per our medical policies, if we deemed it was an emergency we would take the pup straight to the team at Central Vets in Brooklyn.

7. Do the dogs bark a lot?

Generally the dogs only bark in play and some dogs don't even do that. There are certain times when barking increases, such as the beginning and end of the day and when someone comes into reception. This is because the dogs know these are indications that something different might be about to happen.

8. Will my dog have indoor/outdoor access?

We have 3 outside areas and 6 indoor zones. The dogs rotate between indoor and outdoor every 90 minutes.

9. Do you take any type of dog?

All dogs that want to hang out at Nose2tail must pass a suitability assessment. It takes about 30 minutes, and during this time we find out about the dog's history and temperament from the owner, and interact with the dog to make sure that it enjoys and will play appropriately with other dogs.

10. What are the vaccination/ health requirements?

All dogs must be fully vaccinated and up to date with their boosters including Infectious Canine Cough. They must be regularly treated for fleas and worms.

In addition to asking these questions we recommend that you should visit the facility, meet the staff and pay close attention to cleanliness including the smell. Take the time to observe a playgroup and how the staff interact with them.

So if your dog is driving you nuts after work because he's been bored stiff all day, or you just want her to have a little fun while you are at work, maybe doggy daycare is something to think about.

If so, do your research and due diligence. We encourage you to look at a range of daycares and make the decision about the one that is best for your dog.