

#Goals: Fun, Safety and Engagement in the Play Yard

Objective: Great pet care centers should always be trying to improve, grow, and become more profitable. Setting SMART goals ensures everyone on the team knows what your vision is for the coming months and year. Goals are not just for revenue and occupancy rates. This Lunch & Learn is designed to involve your play yard team in goal setting for the play yards to maximize engagement and safety with the pets in your care.

Content: Setting goals ensures that everyone understands what the direction for the business is and what they are working towards. Goal setting doesn't have to be a long and complicated process. You need to pick a theme (Fun, Safety and Engagement in the Play Yard), identify the necessary action items and commit to the process.

Owner/Operator Tip: *Your employees don't just exist to work in your pet care center. This is a great opportunity to develop knowledge in your play yard team by teaching them the value and importance of SMART Goals. This is a skill that can be carried into other parts of their life as well. When people are given the tools to do their jobs well and training to advance in their own careers, they feel supported and happy. Not only are they likely to stay longer, but they will also perform better.*

Prior to Lunch & Learn Session:

- Review the Fights and Bites Survey as this will be your first SMART Goal
- Print the Sample Provided and be prepared to present it to your team.
- Gain access to a large whiteboard or other tool that can be utilized to scribble out brainstorming ideas on goals for next year.

During Lunch & Learn Session:

- Open with your thoughts on why goals are important to you and your center. Describe how goals help to provide direction and achieve success.
- Run through the SMART Goal Example provided on fights and bites.
- Ask for other ideas for goals. Other ideas to consider could relate to increasing interactions with the dogs, reducing the use of spray bottles, training for the Dog Daycare Games etc.
- Choose the three goals that are determined to be the most relevant and put the additional goal ideas through the SMART process
- Leave time for Q and A to discuss the next steps including how and when progress will be tracked and reviewed.
- Close the meeting by thanking your team for their dedication to the safety and health of the pets in your care!

Supporting Tools: The articles below provide additional information on the topic:

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3 Lessons from the Fights & Bites Survey

*Survey conducted by The Dog Gurus – 2016

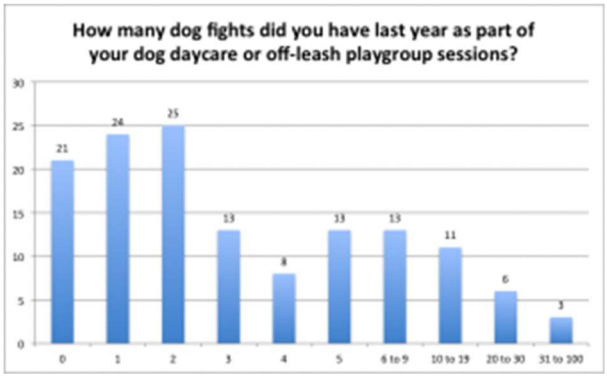
We appreciate the 217 respondents to our first Dog Daycare industry Fights & Bites survey. The responses we received were very interesting and we will continue to analyze the details and share them with you throughout the year. Stepping back and looking at the big picture results there are 3 lessons we want our members to learn:

1. Two or fewer serious incidents requiring medical attention per year to dogs or staff is a realistic benchmark
2. The total number of dogs and staff requiring medical care is tarnishing the industry's image
3. The primary reasons for the most serious incidents that occur can be categorized as failures in your business processes of:
    1. Dog evaluation
    2. Staff training
    3. Dog management

Now that we've shared the lessons let's look a little deeper into the survey findings.

- 66% of business responding have operated daycare for 5 or more years
- Majority of responses came from business in USA, but we also heard from Australia, Bermuda, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom
- Dog Evaluation best practices to follow for low fight and bite rates include
    - Form completed by client and submitted prior to drop-off
    - Performing a separate or multi-visit assessment introducing dogs one at a time
- Maintain group dog ratios of at least 75% green dogs
- Provide foundation skills training (Knowing Dogs) and buddy with experienced staff for best process for training staff

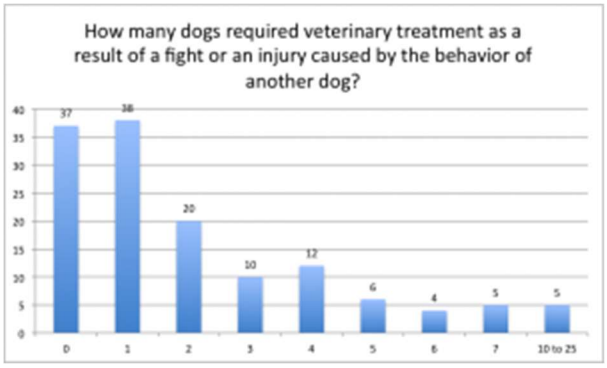
Following are charts of full survey responses related to fights and bites in dog daycare in 2016.



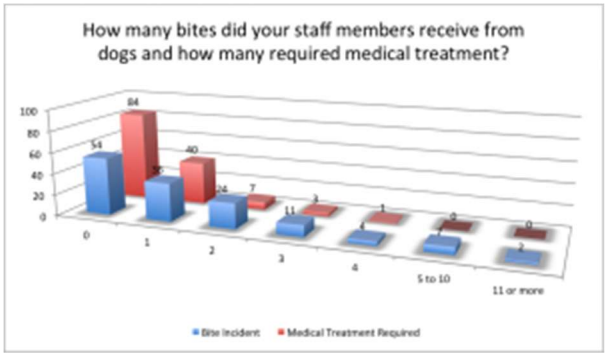
The majority of businesses reported two or fewer fights with 2 being the most commonly reported response. This confirms our industry benchmark of two or fewer fight incidents as a goal for every dog daycare. Now we know some of you are asking, but how does this equate to the total number of dogs that participate in daycare each year. We looked at that calculation and the overall fight percentage is less than 1% (.043%) for our survey respondents.

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However, we ask you; how many dogs are acceptable to require veterinary care for going to dog daycare for a day of play? Let's look at those numbers next.



On average 2.34 dogs per business require veterinary treatment per year. In our survey this represented 321 dogs. That number may seem reasonable, but remember our survey is a very small sample of operators. We would bet that many of the best responded to our survey, so the treatment rate is probably low for the industry overall. There are no solid numbers on the total number of daycares operating in the USA, but if we use 25,000 as an estimate we will probably be conservative. Now let's extrapolate 2.34 dogs requiring veterinary care by 25,000 and 58,500 dogs per year are estimated to go to the vet due to accidents at dog daycare or 160 dogs per day. As an industry are we concerned with this number?



The last chart we prepared reports the number of staff bites and those that required medical treatment. On average .5 staff members per business require veterinary treatment per year. In our survey this is 67 people and again if we extrapolate to the entire industry it means 12,500 per year or over 34 per day receive a bite severe enough to go to a doctor. Your safety record may be good, but worker's compensation insurance rates considers the industry as a whole and is probably contributing to pet care remaining in a high risk category. This means everyone pays more for premiums.

We feel there are opportunities for our members and the industry to learn from the survey. First, safety can be improved as evidenced by the majority of operators that have 2 or fewer incidents to dog or staff members per year that require medical treatment. Best practices shared in our membership and training programs do matter and keep dogs and staff safer.

The last opportunity is to use every incident as a learning case study and go deeper. Don't just look at the first reason your team determines that caused the fight. Look for ways you can improve your existing processes to prevent them in the future.

For Robin and I this was one of the most disappointing aspects to reviewing the survey responses. When we asked for the description of the worst incident and the lesson learned we only scored 15% as great in that we agreed with the lesson they shared. There were 29% that we scored as good in that we agreed with some points but felt more could have been done in changing operations to prevent future incidents. Unfortunately 56% we scored as poor in that we may have disagreed with the lesson and felt there was an obvious missed opportunity to improve safety in the dog daycare program.

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Don't let your staff or the dogs in your care get hurt for no reason. We encourage you to dive deep and ask after every severe incident, what can we change about our existing processes to prevent this in the future? Stay focused on the primary categories shared in the beginning of this post, but also consider these secondary causes:

1. Keeping red dogs in groups
2. Mixing large and small dogs in the same playgroup
3. Not holding staff accountable in following procedures

We appreciate our members and your focus on safety. We are committed to helping you and the industry improve these numbers in the future. Let us know the resources we can provide as part of your membership that will reduce your incident rates. Thank you for placing a priority on keeping the dogs safe!

SMART Goal Example and Explanation

1. Specific. Your goal should be clear and easy to understand.
    - A common goal, "have safer play yards," is too general. There are so many ways to improve safety. How do you want to do it? Is it reducing fights and bites? A more stringent evaluation process? Creating smaller play groups? Break it down and it will be easier to manage.
    - Let's pick reducing fights and bites and make a SMART goal out of it. For example, "We will have no more than two incidents this year requiring vet/medical care."

2. Measurable. A goal to "reduces fights and bites" is not enough. How will you track your progress and how you will know when you have reached your goal? Making your goal measurable means adding a number.
    - "We will have **no more than two incidents** this year requiring vet/medical care."
    - Discuss and document how this will be tracked.

3. Attainable. Before you can add a number, you have to know how high or low you want to go. It's good to 'shoot for the stars', but don't be too extreme. Likewise, a goal that is too easy is also not very motivating. Only you know your limits.
    - Let's take our goal above. What is attainable for you? Our research suggests two incidents is attainable but maybe you need to adjust that a bit in your center and make two incidents a longer term goal.

4. Relevant. Set goals that are important to you, your team, your customers and the dogs in your care. You want the goal to be motivating.
    - Examine our goal so far. Does it seem relevant to your pet care center? Safety should always be number one so this one is an easy yes!!! Just be sure you are doing analysis on your other SMART goals. Make sure it is a good time to focus on each particular goal, choose something that IS motivating to most everyone.

5. Time-bound. Include an end-point. Knowing that you have a deadline motivates you to get started.
    - "We will have no more than two incidents **this year** requiring vet/medical care."

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