

Encountering a Dog While Jogging

Several strategies can help you successfully greet a strange, unleashed dog while running.

By September Morn

Q. I like jogging and I would like to know how I should behave if I see an unleashed dog running at me.

A. Dogs tend to chase moving objects, so if a dog starts to chase you, stop running for a moment. Some dogs will then lose interest in you and you can walk away, then resume jogging after you're a bit farther from the dog. Other dogs won't lose interest right away and will either stand there waiting for you to resume running, or will continue their approach. If you're uncertain whether the dog is friendly or not, here are a couple of tips to help determine that.

Call the dog, "Here, puppy! Come here!" in a friendly voice, patting your leg as if you wanted the dog to come greet you. If the dog is friendly, he'll come to you wagging his tail. If the dog is not friendly, he'll either stand his ground and bark or growl, or will turn and head back to his yard. This will tip you off to the right address to report to animal control.

With sufficient distance between you and the dog, most become less likely to continue their chase. Here are a couple of items that fit in a pocket or small pack and can either delay or repel most dogs, allowing you to increase your distance from them. Dry cat kibble or smelly dog treats. Slow to a walk and scatter a handful of these treats on the ground behind you when a dog starts to chase you. When they find yummy food on the ground, both friendly and unfriendly dogs will usually stop for a snack instead of continuing the chase. This may cause dogs to optimistically watch for you in the future, but they'll be thinking of you as a source of good stuff, rather than an "intruder" to chase away.

Pocket-sized air-powered boat horn. This will discourage unfriendly dogs from chasing you. Hold the horn behind you as you walk away, pointing the sound-funnel toward the dog. The noise is loud and startling, and most dogs won't want to come closer. Also, the loud sound may attract the attention of the dog's owner, who will hopefully come out and control the dog.