



EVALUATION GUIDE

Dog Daycare Evaluation Guide

A toolkit to help you choose a daycare that's as serious about your **silly goose** as you are. The questions inside will help you evaluate the facility, the staff, and the care your dog will get every day.





WHICH SETTING IS RIGHT FOR YOUR DOG?

Home Pet Sitter	Boarding Facility	Daycare Facility
Your pet is not up-to-date on vaccines or is not spayed/neutered	Your dog is up-to-date on vaccines and is spayed/neutered	
Your pet has separation anxiety or has trouble adapting to new spaces	Your pet is well-socialized and does not exhibit extreme resource guarding (food, toys, people)	
Your pet is reactive or afraid of other animals or people	Your pet does not have separation anxiety and is not reactive towards people, barriers or animals.	
Your pet needs to be under constant supervision due to a health complication	Your pet adapts quickly to new environments/people and does not have significant supervision requirements or health concerns	
You'll be away for a few hours, for a day trip or longer trip.	You'll be away for at least a few days.	You'll be away for a few hours (less than one day)



DOG SAFETY

Is the area free of hazards, like electrical cords, wires or broken toys?

What happens if a dog is injured while at daycare?

How do they assess injury severity? How soon is the owner notified? Is there a vet office nearby for emergencies?

Does the facility have secure fencing and is the area free of hazards?

No spaces in fences. Doors dividing play areas and those leading to the street should be secured with double gates.

Do they require proof of current vaccinations or a Titer test?

What are the spay and neuter requirements?

Are dogs separated by size, temperament or playstyle?

Do they have indoor and outdoor facilities?

Are there certain temperatures or weather that require indoor play only?

Does the facility have procedures in place for emergencies, natural disasters or injuries?



Texas Law Note: HB 2063 mandates kennels provide written notice if pets will be unattended during certain hours or if the facility lacks a working sprinkler system.



COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

Will they notify you promptly if they see a change in behavior or well-being?

In the case of an injury or emergency, what is their communication protocol?

If a dog is seriously injured or dies in their care, what are their communication protocols to other clients?

Will they share if a dog has died or been seriously injured in their care?

How did they handle the situation and communication with the owners?

Will you receive a daily report card?

Are you allowed to tour the facility before signing your dog up?

If your dog has a GPS Collar, communicate that they are not to remove it for any reason.



YOUR DOG'S DAYCARE EXPERIENCE

Will they do a behavior assessment, temperament test, or trial process?

Are there a variety of activities for varying energy levels and temperaments?

How many dogs are in each playgroup? What is the ratio of daycare staff to dogs?

Are they able to provide an example of a daily schedule?

Are there enrichment offerings?

Will your dog have indoor and outdoor access?



DAYCARE STAFF & CERTIFICATIONS

Are there any situations where dogs will be unsupervised during the day?

Does the daycare conduct background checks on their staff?

Are they trained in canine first aid or CPR?

What training or certifications does the daycare or staff have?

Example: Fear Free Boarding & Daycare Certification, IBPSA (International Boarding & Pet Services Association), or similar.

Ask: "If my dog does [unwanted behavior], what do you do?"

Their answer should never include physical punishment, aversives, intimidation, or other dominance-based methods.



A note on certifications: In an industry with little to no regulatory requirements, certifications mean something. They reflect a provider who chose to pursue formal training and professional standards when nobody required them to. But they're not a performance guarantee. Some certified providers will fall short; some uncertified providers will exceed your expectations. **Use certifications as one input in your evaluation, not a substitute for it.**



Remember: This guide is not a checklist. It's a tool. Not every question will apply to every situation. Focus on the factors most important to you and your silly goose.



DAYCARE GREEN & RED FLAGS

- ✓ The facility appears clean and they can walk you through their daily operations and cleaning schedule.
 - ✓ There is more than one staff member per group throughout the day. Staff are trained to read dog body language and know how to de-escalate using voice, gentle redirection, and separation when needed.
 - ✓ They have a clear strategy for separating dogs who are stressed, overstimulated, or need a break.
 - ✓ They assess dogs on an ongoing basis, not just at intake. They do test runs, communicate concerns, and don't assume a regular is always a good fit.
 - ✓ They have a clear procedure for handling incidents, communicate openly with clients when something happens, and have a policy for when a dog's time at the facility should be discontinued.
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- ✗ They refuse to give a tour. The facility looks dirty or there's no clear cleaning routine.
 - ✗ Staff-to-dog ratios are low and staff lack training in dog behavior, body language, or group management.
 - ✗ They have no system for assessing whether a dog is a good fit. They skip test runs, don't follow up after the first day, and keep dogs in group settings even when they're clearly not doing well.
 - ✗ They have no procedure after an incident. They don't assess injuries, don't evaluate the dogs involved, and continue allowing a dog with repeated intense reactions to return.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

*Asking questions is an act of love. This guide exists to help you ask the ones that matter most for the care of your **silly goose**.*

ABOUT ROLAND'S SILLY GOOSE CREW

Roland's Silly Goose Crew is an Austin, Texas 501c3 nonprofit founded after our dog Roland was killed at a local dog daycare in October 2022. He escaped through an unsecured door and was hit by a car. There were no consequences, no required reporting, and no required proactive disclosures to other families.

We started RSGC so no other family would face what we did without information, resources, or recourse. Through free evaluation guides, community partnerships, and legislative advocacy, we're working to bring transparency and accountability to the dog care industry.

Support Our Mission

Every guide we create and distribute is free. Your tax-deductible donation helps us reach more families, develop new resources, and advocate for stronger protections for dogs in Texas.

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SOURCES

petmd.com • petguide.com • animalhumanesociety.org • akc.org • preventivevet.com • whole-dog-journal.com • Cathy Madson, MA, FDM, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

