



EVALUATION GUIDE

Adventure Daycare Evaluation Guide

A toolkit to help you evaluate enrichment-based and outdoor adventure daycare programs for your **silly goose**.





BEFORE THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

If your dog lives for mud puddles, trail sniffs, and the kind of tired that only comes from a full day outside, enrichment and adventure daycare programs might be their dream come true. These programs are growing fast across Austin and beyond, offering everything from hiking and swimming to scent work and agility.

Every adventure comes with its own set of considerations, though. Outdoor environments, weather, water safety, wildlife, and transportation to off-site locations all introduce questions that our traditional daycare guides don't address. This guide is here to help you ask them, so you can find a program where your silly goose thrives.



ARE ADVENTURE DAYCARES THE RIGHT FIT?

Not every dog is a good fit for every type of enrichment program. Consider the following before enrolling:

- Does your dog enjoy new environments, or do unfamiliar settings cause stress?
- Is your dog comfortable around other dogs in unstructured, open settings?
- Does your dog have reliable recall, or will they need to be leashed at all times?
- Does your dog have any physical limitations, joint issues, or health conditions that could be aggravated by hiking, swimming, or vigorous activity?
- Is your dog reactive to wildlife, cyclists, joggers, or other environmental stimuli?
- How does your dog handle heat and extreme weather?



PROGRAM STRUCTURE & ACTIVITIES

What specific enrichment activities are offered? Can you opt your dog in or out of activities?

Examples: hiking, swimming/water play, scent work, agility, puzzle toys, decompression walks, sensory gardens, etc.

How are activities tailored to individual dogs' energy levels, sizes, and temperaments?

What does a typical day look like from drop-off to pick-up?

Ask for a sample schedule. Understand the balance between activity and rest periods and flag any concerns.

Are dogs transported to off-site locations for activities?

If yes, how are dogs secured during transport? Check out our [Pet Transportation Guide](#) for more questions and support.

How much time do dogs spend in active enrichment vs. downtime/rest?

Are there indoor options or shelter available if weather becomes unsafe?



SUPERVISION & STAFFING

What is the staff-to-dog ratio during activities?

Ratios may need to be lower (more staff per dog) for outdoor and adventure activities compared to traditional daycare.

What training and certifications do staff members have?

Look for: canine first aid/CPR, behavior/body language training, outdoor safety certifications, Fear Free or similar.

Are staff trained to identify and respond to heat stroke, dehydration, injuries, snake bites, or allergic reactions?

How do they manage group dynamics during unstructured outdoor play?

Is there always a staff member with line-of-sight on every dog, or do dogs explore independently?



OUTDOOR & ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

Where do outdoor activities take place? Will you be proactively notified if the location changes?

| Private property? Public trails? Dog parks? Understand the setting and who else has access.

How is the outdoor environment assessed for hazards before each session?

| **Examples:** toxic plants, standing water, wildlife, broken glass, unsecured fencing, steep terrain.

What is their heat safety policy?

| At what temperature do they cancel or modify outdoor activities? How do they monitor dogs for signs of overheating? Is shade and fresh water always available? Do they have backup activities and locations for summer months?

What is their policy for severe weather (thunderstorms, flooding, extreme cold)?

If activities involve water (lakes, creeks, pools), what water safety protocols are in place?

| Are life vests provided for dogs? Are dogs expected to know how to swim before enrolling? Are staff trained in water rescue? Is water quality tested or assessed? Are there any vaccination requirements?

How do they handle wildlife encounters (snakes, coyotes, scorpions, fire ants)?

What measures are in place to prevent dogs from escaping or becoming lost during off-leash activities?



Pro-tip: We recommend getting a GPS collar for your dog for day-to-day peace of mind, but especially before enrolling in an outdoor Adventure Daycare where there could be a heightened risk of escape.



COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

Will you receive photos, videos, or updates during the day?

How and when will you be notified if your dog is injured, overheated, or has a negative experience?

If your dog escapes, gets lost, or is separated from the group, what is their communication protocol?

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

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

Can you visit or observe a session before enrolling?

Do they provide a written summary of your dog's experience after each session?



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Do they carry a canine first aid kit on all outings?

Is there a veterinary clinic nearby, and do they have a relationship with a vet for emergencies?

What is their emergency evacuation plan for off-site locations?

Do they carry emergency contact information for every dog on every outing?

Do they have insurance that covers off-site and outdoor activities?



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

How do they assess whether a dog is a good fit for the program? Is there a trial session or evaluation?

What is their policy if your dog is not enjoying an activity or appears stressed?

If the program involves swimming, do they assess each dog's comfort and ability in water before enrolling?

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.

rolandsillygoosecrew.org/donate



All Our Guides

Free digital versions + new guides as they launch



Follow us

Join our community on Instagram to stay informed

SOURCES

akc.org • avma.org • aspca.org • redcross.org • humanesociety.org • vcahospitals.com • preventitivevet.com • whole-dog-journal.com

