



SAFETY GUIDE

Dog Event & Festival Safety Guide

A toolkit to help you evaluate dog-friendly events and make more informed decisions about keeping your **silly goose** safe at festivals, gatherings, and public outings.





KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Austin is one of the most dog-friendly cities in the country, and dog-friendly events, festivals, markets, and pop-ups happen year-round. Taking your dog to events can be a wonderful bonding experience, but events also come with unique risks including heat exposure, overstimulation, unfamiliar dogs, loud noises, escape opportunities, and limited access to veterinary care.

Unlike the other guides in our series, this one is less about evaluating a business and more about preparing yourself and your dog for the event environment. As with the other guides in our series, this guide is not intended to discourage you from bringing your dog to events. It is a tool to help you prepare in advance and evaluate whether a specific event is a good fit for your dog.



ARE PUBLIC EVENTS RIGHT FOR YOUR DOG?

Is your dog comfortable in crowds, around loud music, and with lots of stimulation?

Does your dog do well around unfamiliar dogs, including dogs that may approach without warning?

Is your dog reactive to children, strollers, bikes, loud noises, or sudden movements?

How does your dog handle heat?

This is critical especially for events in Austin or across Texas. Outdoor events will often take place in direct sun during summer months. Without reliable access to shade or water, dogs can easily overheat.

Does your dog have reliable leash manners, or will a crowded space be stressful for both of you?



Remember: It's okay to decide that events aren't right for your dog! Like humans, some dogs don't thrive in crowded or public spaces. Leaving your dog home (or with a trusted sitter) can also be the most loving decision.



EVALUATING THE EVENT

Does the event explicitly welcome dogs, or is it just “dog-tolerant”?

Dog-friendly events should have intentional accommodations, not just an absence of a “no dogs” policy.

Does the event list any pet policies?

Leash requirements, vaccination requirements, pet-specific areas (cooling or water stations), pet registration, etc.

Is there shaded seating, water stations, or cooling areas designated for dogs? Is the space fenced in?

Are there designated relief areas (potty stations) for dogs?

Does the event have a plan for lost or separated dogs?

Is there veterinary support or a first aid station on-site or nearby?

Are there areas of the event that are off-limits to dogs (food vendor areas, stages, indoor spaces)?

Has your dog been to a similar event before? If not, consider starting with a smaller, less stimulating event.



Pro-tip: When in doubt, ask these three questions and if the answer isn't a resounding “yes!” to all three, this event might not be right for your dog (and that's ok!):

- Is the **event** designed for your dog to be there?
- Will **your dog** enjoy being there?
- Will **other people or dogs** enjoy your dog being there?



PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

What to Bring

- Fresh water and a portable bowl; don't rely on the event providing water for dogs.
- Poop bags (more than you think you'll need).
- A sturdy leash.
- A charged GPS collar.
- Your dog's ID tags, up-to-date and legible. Consider a temporary tag with your cell phone number.
- A cooling vest, bandana, or portable shade if the event is outdoors in warm weather.
- A familiar blanket or mat your dog can settle on if they need a break.
- Treats and a favorite toy to help manage stress or redirect attention.
- Vet contact information (on your phone is fine).

Before You Leave Home

- Make sure your dog is up-to-date on vaccinations, especially if they'll be around other dogs.
- Ensure your dog's microchip information is current.
- Exercise your dog before the event to take the edge off excess energy.
- Feed your dog a normal meal before going; a hangry dog at a food festival is a recipe for problems.
- Check the weather forecast and have a plan to leave early if conditions become unsafe.



AT THE EVENT

Heat & Weather Safety

- Check the pavement temperature before you go; if it's too hot for your hand, it's too hot for your dog's paws.
- Watch for signs of overheating: excessive panting, drooling, glazed eyes, stumbling, vomiting.
- Take frequent water and shade breaks; your dog won't tell you they need one.
- Avoid the hottest part of the day (typically 11am–3pm during warmer months).

Overstimulation & Stress

- Watch your dog's body language throughout the event. Signs of stress include: lip licking, yawning, whale eye, tucked tail, ears pinned back, panting, avoidance, or freezing.
- Have a plan to leave early if your dog is overwhelmed; don't push through for your own enjoyment.
- Give your dog breaks away from the crowd. Find a quiet corner or walk to a less busy area.
- Be your dog's advocate: It is okay to ask other people not to pet your dog or to keep their dog at a distance!

Escape Prevention

- Keep your dog on a secure, non-retractable leash at all times.
- Use a harness in addition to a collar - startled dogs can slip out of collars.
- Be extra cautious near entry/exit points, gates, and open fencing.
- If your dog is spooked by a noise or stimulus, hold your leash firmly and move to a quiet area to regroup.



AFTER THE EVENT

Check your dog for ticks, burrs, cuts, or irritation – especially paws and ears!

Offer plenty of water and a chance to rest. (Events are exhausting even for dogs that seemed to enjoy them.)

Monitor your dog for delayed signs of stress or illness in the 24–48 hours after the event.

Reflect honestly:

- Did your dog enjoy the experience?
- Would you bring them again?
- What would you do differently?

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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