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How to Choose Dog Park Agility Equipment For Off-Leash Areas

The kind of dog park agility equipment you choose will affect user safety, the amount of maintenance required, the lifespan of the equipment, and the overall quality of the play experience. Dog parks provide the greatest amount of recreation created for the investment, so it pays to choose equipment that will be durable and easy to maintain.

Here are some important considerations when choosing equipment for your dog park:

Safety: Safety should be your highest priority; avoid extremely steep or tall equipment over 3' that could injure an inexperienced dog (or child) if they fell from it. All surfaces need to be extremely slip resistant, so steer clear of components made with plastic or plywood sheets which do not provide traction. It's also important to note that children's playground equipment is not appropriate or safe for use in dog parks, so make sure the tunnels aren't just converted playground tubes.

Durable Materials: Dog parks are highly corrosive environments, so be sure to select products that are made with heavy gauge, reinforced aluminum. Unlike steel, aluminum will not rust and is better suited to outdoor use. The support posts should have a powder coat finish for protection and all hardware should be vandal resistant stainless steel. Avoid products made with wood which can rot or absorb smells, or products made with PVC pipe which is brittle and easily broken in a public setting.

Adjustable Challenges: Because dogs have such a wide range of sizes and abilities, look for components that can be adjusted to accommodate size and skill level. Does the manufacturer also offer products made specifically for small-dog areas within the dog park? Dog parks are unique in that they provide multigenerational recreation, so make sure the equipment adjusts easily so everyone can enjoy it.

Dog Park Furnishings: Dog parks are extremely popular places and provide great opportunities for both people and dogs to socialize. Seating should be comfortable, shaded, and arranged to encourage conversations between park users. Consider adding accessories like bulletin boards and signage at the park entrance, fire hydrants, and pick-up bag dispensers to help keep the park clean.

Dog Watering and Cooling Stations: Dogs (and people) quickly work up a thirst during exercise, so it is critical to provide water. Dog watering stations should be mandatory and constructed from stainless steel to prevent rusting and corrosion. Consider providing an ADA accessible human fountain with wash down faucets for maintenance staff as well. Spray features can help keep dogs cool on hot days, but choose products with a timed, low flow valve to discourage unwanted bathing and water waste.

Supplier's focus: Unfortunately some equipment manufacturers are really in the playground business and only make a few dog park products on the side to increase sales volume. Were their products developed with the help of veterinarians, structural engineers, agility experts and dog people? Choose a supplier who understands and specializes *exclusively* in dog parks.

Warrantees: Reputable suppliers will offer comprehensive warrantees that stand behind the quality of the products for up to 5 years. Will the company replace the items if they're determined to be defective?