

DOG FIGHTS



What is the risk?

Fights can occur at any time between dogs, but most often happen between unfamiliar ones. The risk increases when multiple dogs share common spaces (e.g., dog parks) or are housed in boarding facilities.

Why do we worry?

Physical trauma from dog fights can be extensive. Dog bite wounds are immediately contaminated and can quickly become infected if left untreated. Depending on the severity and location of the injury, systemic infection may occur.

What should pet owners do?

If a dog is known to be reactive toward other dogs, avoid common areas, off-leash activities, and rushed introductions. If a fight breaks out, do not put yourself in the middle and risk injury. Instead, try to separate the dogs using distractions, such as loud noises or spraying water.

Veterinary Care

Check the dog for puncture wounds or lacerations. Clean any wounds and assess the need for drains or closure—sedation is often required. Consider underlying trauma based on location. Send the dog home with an Elizabethan collar, start prophylactic antibiotics, and update the rabies vaccine. For vaccine requirements, visit [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov).

