

Daycare — Handler Checklist

What 'good' daycare actually looks like.

Most daycares are warehouses with a play yard. The dogs leave overstimulated, sleep-deprived, and rehearsing the exact behaviors you're paying a trainer to fix.

Use cases & applications

Adolescent energy outlet

For: 12–24 month dogs

Curated groups of size-and-temperament matches, with active interruption and forced rest periods.

Work-from-home, dog underfoot

For: Remote workers

Two-day-a-week structure so the dog gets predictable social and rest cycles.

Breeder's adolescent grow-out

For: Breeders raising kept-back pups

Controlled exposure to neutral adult dogs as part of social development.

Handler how-tos

Vetting a daycare before you sign up

- 1 Ask the staff-to-dog ratio. Anything worse than 1:10 is a warehouse.
- 2 Ask how they break up groups: by size, by play style, by energy. 'All together' is the wrong answer.
- 3 Watch for forced rest periods. Dogs that play 8 hours straight aren't having fun, they're cortisol-poisoned.
- 4 Ask what they do when a dog gets over-aroused. 'We let them work it out' is a fight in the making.
- 5 Tour during peak hours, not at drop-off. The dogs tell you everything.

Field checklist (check as completed):

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Safety notes

Read before every session. These are non-negotiable.

- ! All daycare dogs are temperament-evaluated before joining any group.
- ! Mid-day rest period is mandatory — overstimulation creates behavior issues.
- ! Cap daycare at 3 days/week for most dogs to avoid cortisol overload.
- ! Reactive or behavior-case dogs are placed in solo daycare only.

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This checklist is a working reference. It does not replace hands-on coaching from a qualified trainer.