

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 雞飛狗走

*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*

The worst nightmare happened at a zoo in Germany – a bear broke out of its cage.

Visitors ran for their lives. Some took refuge in a monkey cage. Angry monkeys can be dangerous too, but they probably won't kill you. A fully-grown bear most likely would.

The incident ended with no casualty on the human side. But Taps the Bear paid the ultimate price for a few moments of freedom. It was shot dead by a zookeeper.

One might describe the chaotic scene as visitors scurrying for cover with the idiom “雞飛狗走” (*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*). “雞” (*ji1*) is “a chicken,” “飛” (*fei1*) “to fly,” “狗” (*gou3*) “a dog” and “走” (*zou3*) “to walk,” “to run.” Literally, “雞飛狗走” (*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*) is “chickens fly, dogs run.”

When a wolf burst into a farm, all the

domesticated animals would be frightened. Chickens will run, wings flapping, and dogs would scamper. “雞飛狗走” (*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*) depicts such a scene. So figuratively, “雞飛狗走” (*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*) means “everyone is running away,” “in turmoil.”

A situation of “雞飛狗走” (*ji1 fei1 gou3 zou3*) does not necessarily involve chickens and dogs. In fact, the idiom is used most often to describe people's behavior.

But it is generally not appropriate to use it in a serious situation, such as people running from real danger, like a bomb or a gun-toting assailant, as it would be considered flippant. The idiom should also not be used in the zoo incident had it resulted in death or injury of people.

### Terms containing the character “雞” (*ji1*) include:

雞蛋 (*ji1 dan4*) – egg

雞毛 (*ji1 mao2*) – chicken feather

雞毛掃 (*ji1 mao2 sao3*) – feather duster

雞尾酒 (*ji1 wei3 jiu3*) – a cocktail