

## The Facts About Chaining or Tethering Dogs

### 1. What is meant by "chaining" or "tethering" dogs?

These terms refer to the practice of fastening a dog to a stationary object or stake, usually in the owner's backyard, as a means of keeping the animal under control. These terms do not refer to the periods when an animal is walked on a leash.

### 2. Is there a problem with continuous chaining or tethering?

Yes, the practice is both inhumane and a threat to the safety of the confined dog, other animals, and humans.

### 3. Why is tethering dogs inhumane?

Dogs are naturally social beings who thrive on interaction with human beings and other animals. A dog kept chained in one spot for hours, days, months, or even years suffers immense psychological damage. An otherwise friendly and docile dog, when kept continuously chained, becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious, and often aggressive.

In many cases, the necks of chained dogs become raw and covered with sores, the result of improperly fitted collars and the dogs' constant yanking and straining to escape confinement. Dogs have even been found with collars embedded in their necks, the result of years of neglect at the end of a chain. In one case, a veterinarian had to euthanize a dog whose collar, an electrical cord, was so embedded in the animal's neck that it was difficult to see the plug.

### 4. Who says tethering dogs is inhumane?

In addition to The Humane Society of the United States and numerous animal experts, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a statement in the July 2, 1996, *Federal Register* against tethering:

*"Our experience in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act has led us to conclude that continuous confinement of dogs by a tether is inhumane. A tether significantly restricts a dog's movement. A tether can also become tangled around or hooked on the dog's shelter structure or other objects, further restricting the dog's movement and potentially causing injury."*

### 5. How does tethering or chaining dogs pose a danger to humans?

Dogs tethered for long periods can become highly aggressive. Dogs feel naturally protective of their territory; when confronted with a perceived threat, they respond according to their fight-or-flight instinct. A chained dog, unable to take flight, often feels forced to fight, attacking any unfamiliar animal or person who unwittingly wanders into his or her territory.

Numerous attacks on people by tethered dogs have been documented. For example, a study published in the September 15, 2000, issue of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* reported that 17% of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans between 1979 and 1998 were restrained on their owners' property at the time of the attack. Tragically, the victims of such attacks are often children who are unaware of the chained dog's presence until it is too late. Furthermore, a tethered dog who finally does get loose from his chains may remain aggressive, and is likely to chase and attack unsuspecting passersby and pets.

### 6. Why is tethering dangerous to dogs?

In addition to the psychological damage wrought by continuous chaining, dogs forced to live on a chain make easy targets for other animals, humans, and biting insects. A chained animal may suffer harassment and teasing from insensitive humans, stinging bites from insects, and, in the worst cases, attacks by other animals. Chained dogs are also easy targets for thieves looking to steal animals for sale to research institutions or to be used as training fodder for organized animal fights. Finally, dogs' tethers can become entangled with other objects, which can choke or strangle the dogs to death.

### 7. Are these dogs dangerous to other animals?

In some instances, yes. Any other animal that comes into their area of confinement is in jeopardy. Cats, rabbits, smaller dogs, and others may enter the area when the tethered dog is asleep and then be fiercely attacked when the dog awakens.

### 3. Are tethered dogs otherwise treated well?

Rarely does a chained or tethered dog receive sufficient care. Tethered dogs suffer from sporadic feedings, overturned water bowls, inadequate veterinary care, and extreme temperatures. During snow storms, these dogs often have no access to shelter. During periods of

extreme heat, they may not receive adequate water or protection from the sun. What's more, because their often neurotic behavior makes them difficult to approach, chained dogs are rarely given even minimal affection. Tethered dogs may become "part of the scenery" and can be easily ignored by their owners.

#### **9. Are the areas in which tethered dogs are confined usually comfortable?**

No, because the dogs have to eat, sleep, urinate, and defecate in a single confined area. Owners who chain their dogs are also less likely to clean the area. Although there may have once been grass in an area of confinement, it is usually so beaten down by the dog's pacing that the ground consists of nothing but dirt or mud.

#### **10. But how else can people confine dogs?**

The HSUS recommends that all dogs be kept indoors at night, taken on regular walks, and otherwise provided with adequate attention, food, water, and veterinary care. If an animal must be housed outside at certain times, he should be placed in a suitable pen with adequate square footage and shelter from the elements.

#### **11. Should chaining or tethering ever be allowed?**

To become well-adjusted companion animals, dogs should interact regularly with people and other animals, and should receive regular exercise. It is an owner's responsibility to properly restrain her dog, just as it is the owner's responsibility to provide adequate attention and socialization. Placing an animal on a restraint to get fresh air can be acceptable if it is done for a short period. However, keeping an animal tethered for long periods is never acceptable.

#### **12. If a dog is chained or tethered for a period of time, can it be done humanely?**

Animals who must be kept on a tether should be secured in such a way that the tether cannot become entangled with other objects. Collars used to attach an animal should be comfortable and properly fitted; choke chains should never be used. Restraints should allow the animal to move about and lie down comfortably. Animals should never be tethered during natural disasters such as floods, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, or blizzards.

#### **13. What about attaching a dog's leash to a "pulley run"?**

Attaching a dog's leash to a long line—such as a clothesline or a manufactured device known as a pulley run—and letting the animal have a larger area in which to explore is preferable to tethering the dog to a stationary object. However, many of the same problems associated with tethering still apply, including attacks on or by other animals, lack of socialization, and safety.

#### **14. What can be done to correct the problem of tethering dogs?**

At least 25 communities have passed laws that regulate the practice of tethering animals. Maumelle, Arkansas; Tucson, Arizona; and New Hanover, North Carolina, are a few communities that prohibit the chaining or tethering of dogs as a means of continuous confinement. Many other communities allow tethering only under certain conditions; Jefferson County, Kentucky, for example, prohibits dogs from being tethered for more than eight hours in any 24-hour period.

#### **15. Why should a community outlaw the continuous chaining or tethering of dogs?**

Animal control and humane agencies receive countless calls every day from citizens concerned about animals in these cruel situations. Animal control officers, paid at taxpayer expense, spend many hours trying to educate pet owners about the dangers and cruelty involved in this practice.

A chained animal is caught in a vicious cycle; frustrated by long periods of boredom and social isolation, he becomes a neurotic shell of his former self—further deterring human interaction and kindness. In the end, the helpless dog can only suffer the frustration of watching the world go by in isolation—a cruel fate for what is by nature a highly social animal. Any city, county, or state that bans this practice is a safer, more humane community.

To provide your dog with a comfortable doghouse, consider these suggestions:

- The house should be large enough to allow the dog to stand up and turn around comfortably, but small enough to enable the dog to retain body heat.
- The house should have a slanted, waterproof roof to allow rainwater to run off.
- If the doghouse is made of wood, it should be raised off the ground at least two inches to prevent the floor from rotting.
- The door should be just large enough for your dog to enter easily.
- During the winter months, to protect your dog from cold wind, the door should be covered by a flexible plastic flap—such as a floor runner that doesn't have spikes on one side. A piece of carpet can work in a pinch, but it can get wet and freeze.
- Clean, dry bedding such as hay, straw, or cedar shavings should be provided. The bedding should be changed weekly to prevent mold and to keep the doghouse sanitary.
- In warmer months, the dog should also be provided with shade such as a tree or tarp. A doghouse in direct sun becomes an oven and will not keep a dog cool.
- Finally, anytime your dog is kept outside, be sure to provide fresh water in a tip-proof bowl or large bucket. Make sure the water doesn't freeze during colder months.

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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

## Do You Chain Your Dog?

**D**o you ever keep your dog tied up outside? If so, you're not alone.

There are many reasons why people chain their dogs outside. Many people believe that dogs *should* live outside, and they keep the dog tied up because he or she escapes the yard or digs in the garden. Or maybe the dog has grown too large to be inside, or has developed a behavior problem that the owner is unable to deal with, so the dog stays in the yard. Or perhaps the dog is kept outside to protect the home.

Whatever the reasons, fewer dog owners seem to be keeping their dogs tied up outside. And many communities have passed laws against long-term chaining of dogs.

Why? There are two major reasons. First, more people are learning that continuous tethering is bad for dogs. As pack animals, dogs have been bred for thousands of years to form a strong attachment to a human family. An otherwise friendly and happy dog, when kept continually chained and isolated, often becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious, and aggressive. In fact, studies show that chained dogs are much more likely to bite than unchained dogs.

In addition, chained dogs may unintentionally hang themselves if they are tethered too close to a fence and attempt to jump it. Chained dogs are also subject to attacks by other animals and cruel humans.

### Getting Your Dog Off the Chain

A second reason for the decline in chaining is that many dog owners have learned to solve the problems that caused them to tie their dogs outside in the first place. If you would like to provide your dog with an alternative to a rope or chain, consider these suggestions:

- Install a fence if your property does not already have one. Or consider installing a large chain-link dog run. If you install a dog run, make sure it meets these minimum space requirements. Be sure to allow extra space for a doghouse.

| Number of dogs | Under 50 lbs        | Over 50 lbs         |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1              | 6 x 10 (60 sq ft)   | 8 x 10 (80 sq ft)   |
| 2              | 8 x 10 (80 sq ft)   | 8 x 12 (96 sq ft)   |
| 3              | 8 x 12 (96 sq ft)   | 10 x 14 (140 sq ft) |
| 4              | 10 x 12 (120 sq ft) | 12 x 16 (192 sq ft) |

Note: Depending on where you live, your city or county may require that you provide more space than these guidelines suggest.

- If you have a fence and your dog can jump over it, install a 45-degree inward extension to the top of your existing fence. Many home improvement stores sell these extensions.
- If your dog digs under the fence to escape your yard, bury chicken wire to a depth of one foot below where the fence meets the ground (be sure to bend in the sharp edges). Or place large rocks at the base of the fence.

- If the two previous options don't work for your "escape artist," consider using a cable runner or electronic fencing. These options are not perfect, but they will give your dog more freedom. Be sure to use these options only if you also have a fence that protects your dog from people and other animals.
- If your dog digs where you don't want him or her to (such as in a garden or flower bed), consider putting plastic garden fencing or a similar barrier around the area. Or provide your dog with his or her own sandbox. Bury toys in the sandbox and use positive reinforcement to teach your dog that it is okay to dig there.
- Enroll your dog in an obedience class—especially if his or her behavior is the main reason you keep your dog outside.
- Spay or neuter your dog if you haven't already had this done. A neutered dog is less likely to roam and more content to stay at home. These are safe procedures that have many health and behavioral benefits. Ask your veterinarian for more information.
- Remember that behavior problems such as barking, chewing, and digging are often the result of a lack of stimulation in a dog's life. By providing your dog with proper toys, exercise, "people time," and positive reinforcement, you may alter undesirable behaviors and teach acceptable house manners. In addition, a dog who is inside the house is much more likely to deter an intruder than a dog chained in the yard.

### Giving Your Dog Proper Shelter

In addition to safe confinement, dogs need adequate shelter from the elements. Dogs kept outside may be unintentionally exposed to bitter cold temperatures in the winter and scorching heat in the summer. To protect your dog from harsh weather, provide a well-constructed doghouse. However, keep in mind that some breeds with very long or short coats cannot tolerate extreme outside temperatures even when provided with proper shelter. Also remember that if you have more than one dog, you need to provide a doghouse for each one.