

# OUTSIDE DOGS: LIFE ON A LEASH

Imagine sitting in a yard, tethered in place, with nothing to do and no chance to go anywhere. Day after day. Alone. That's what chaining is like. Chaining means confining a dog with a tether attached to a dog house or a stake in the ground. It is one of the common forms of animal cruelty. Chaining is a widespread practice and - as with many historical injustices - this may cause people to assume it is acceptable. In fact, it is an improper way to confine a dog, with negative effects on the dog's health, temperament and training. A chained dog's life is a lonely, frustrating, miserable existence, without opportunities for even the most basic dog behaviors of running and sniffing in their own fenced yard. Dogs chained for even a few weeks begin to show problems.



Virtually every dog that spends most of the day on the end of a chain will show temperament problems - no surprise to those who understand canine behavior. Chaining, by definition, keeps a dog in solitary confinement, continually thwarting its pack instinct to be with other animals or with its human "pack." The dog is usually chained away from the house and has human contact only at feeding time. Those dogs lucky enough to be brought inside at night are usually deposited in the basement or other areas away from the family living quarters. These dogs are so desperate for human contact that when they are finally released from their chains, they behave in such an unruly manner that they are disciplined and quickly dispatched to another isolated area. Some of the saddest situations are those where the family children run and play in the yard just outside the reach of a chained dog. The dog is desperate to play with the children, but their only exposure to the dog is to be jumped on, so they carefully stay just out of reach - only increasing the dog's frustration.

The most common problem resulting from chaining is hyperactivity, particularly in young dogs. The chained dog is continually frustrated by having their movements restricted. The dog runs to the end of the tether and soon learns that he will be jerked back to the perimeter allowed by the chain. When the dog is finally released, he runs away, jumps on or over anything in his way, and is unresponsive to verbal commands. His behavior frustrates the guardian, who puts the dog back on the chain because the dog doesn't know how to behave! The cycle of suffering continues with the dog becoming even more uncontrollable and the human less willing to deal with the hyperactive behavior. Fear biting and aggression are other common behaviors of chained dogs. The dog seems to know that he cannot escape danger, so he resorts to displaying aggressive behavior. And such dogs have good reason to be aggressive. Chained dogs in urban backyards often serve as targets for gun-toting, rock-throwing individuals who pass through the alleys. It is not surprising that chained dogs are so quick to bite while also displaying timid, fearful behavior when handled.

A dog that has been chained all day or all week has little interest in learning to come when her guardian calls. The dog is interested in running as fast as she can away from her human and confinement. This hyperactive behavior causes the uneducated person to believe he has a "dumb" dog. The guardian then may give up on even limited interaction with the dog, and either leave the dog tied up in permanent misery or get rid of her. People tend to train and care for dogs in the way they saw their parents perform this task. As a result, many people chain dogs because that's what they've been taught, passing on this cruel practice without any

real understanding of canine behavior. People's explanations for chaining their dog often include: "I'm keeping him chained until he learns not to run away," or "I'm keeping him chained until he's housebroken," or "I'm keeping him chained until he calms down." In fact, chaining is going to make all of these positive dog behaviors extremely difficult to obtain. Chaining a young dog, for example, forces her to become accustomed to urinating and defecating where she sleeps, conflicting with her natural instinct to eliminate away from her living area. This makes housebreaking very difficult.

When you see a dog house with a circle of dirt around it, you know you are looking at the "home" of a chained dog. The area where the dog can move about becomes hard-packed dirt that carries the stench of animal waste even if the dog's guardian frequently picks up the fecal matter. The odor of waste draws flies, which bite the dog's ears, often causing serious bloody wounds. Dogs that have been chained for several years often lose portions of their ears, as more tissue is lost each summer from fly bites. Control of internal parasites is more difficult because the chained dog is always close to his own fecal matter and can re-infest himself by stepping in or sniffing his own waste. Also, the dog is forced to have almost continual contact with the ground in the chaining area, which may have a high concentration of parasite larvae.

The final word is that chaining doesn't work - except to serve as a form of confinement that is easy for the human but cruel for the animal. Chained dogs are miserable, and their guardians are often frustrated. Chaining is not an acceptable practice. It's a long-overlooked form of cruelty that must be stopped.

If you have a chained dog, bring your dog inside. If you feel you cannot bring your dog inside, find another home for your animal.

Get to know the dog's guardian if you are concerned about someone else's chained dog. Offer to purchase the dog if you are certain they won't just get another dog...or offer to walk and play with the dog daily. Contact your local authorities if the animal is neglected or abused, and urge your local and state lawmakers to ban tethering in your community and state.