

Outdoor Containments for Dogs

Our topics for this week are:

- **Dog houses and outdoor runs**
- **Fences for dogs**
- **Tethering dogs**

Dog Houses and Runs

Runs

Healthy dogs should be given the opportunity to exercise in a normal manner. For example, each day a dog should be allowed to achieve a running stride. Kennel runs should have a solid wall or at least four feet of vertical visual isolation from other runs and protection from male dogs in adjacent runs urinating from one run into another. The remainder of the run walls should be 3/8 inch stainless steel rods to promote adequate air circulation. Urine should not be able to flow in any direction other than toward the run's floor drain. The door can be hinged or sliding. Hinged doors should only open outward to prevent accidental wedging of a struggling dog attempting to escape. Outdoor runs should have a contiguous, escape-proof roof. If not on concrete, wire mesh should be buried around the inside of the perimeter to prevent a dog escaping by digging out.

Dog Houses

Dog houses are for moisture proof, wind proof, shelter from intense sunlight, rain, snow, sleet, and hail. If properly constructed and sized for the dog, it can provide passive warmth. To fit the dog, the house should be just large enough for the dog to stand on all four feet comfortably, turn around, and lay on its side. If it is larger, it may not sufficiently entrap the dog's body heat in winter. The door should be relatively small, only slightly higher than the top of the dog's shoulders. There should be a flexible water-resistant door flap, a self-closing door, or an interior partial partition that creates a small hallway entrance that prevents wind from blowing directly into the house. For further wind protection, the house should be located on the east or southeast side of a larger structure (house, garage, barn, shed) with the door to the dog house facing east or southeast, away from prevailing winds.

The floor of the dog house should have a solid floor raised at least 2 inches from the ground for insulation. The roof should be hinged to permit easy cleaning. Soft insulating bedding (old shredded clothes, blankets, commercial dog beds, or hay) that cannot be dragged out of the dog house should be provided in winter months. Bedding should be replaced or cleaned on a regular basis. Straw is poor bedding for dogs that is typically dusty and will prick and irritate the skin.

Only dogs that have a dense hair coat for colder weather and has time to gradually adapt to declining temperatures should be maintained outdoors with a dog house.

Fences

Mesh Wire

Wire fences are typical yard containment of dogs. Wire 2 X 2 or 2 X 4 inch mesh, yard and kennel, woven wire, galvanized fence three to five feet tall is economical and safe fencing for dogs. It is flat surfaced, reducing the chance of dogs climbing over in corners. Chain link is more common, but it is easier for dogs to climb out, especially at fence corners.

Invisible Fencing

An invisible fence is an enclosure that functions by using an electric shock to deter a dog from leaving an area surrounded by buried perimeter wire which delivers the shock. The system consists of a combination of a perimeter wire buried up to eight inches deep, a radio signal generator, and special collar containing a battery-driven radio receiver. As a shock receiver collar-wearing dog approaches the perimeter, the collar will issue a warning beep. If this is not a sufficient deterrent, the dog will receive a shock. Ten minutes of training per day for two weeks is recommended to familiarize dogs to the system. Temporary flags marking the perimeter may aid in initial training. The dog must be shocked at least once to learn the consequences of ignoring the warning or perimeter flags.

Potential drawbacks to invisible fencing are system failure due to weak or dead collar batteries or a broken perimeter wire. No barrier exists for animals without a special collar to discourage them from entering the yard which leaves the contained dog vulnerable to injury or death by roaming dogs. The charge may be insufficient for dogs with thick hair coats without the neck being groomed, and excessive shock can occur if a dog's hair coat gets wet. Some dogs wearing a receiver collar will bound through an invisible fence line with high excitement but then refuse to return for fear of being shocked. Some dogs fight going past a perimeter fence even if the fence electricity is off or they are not wearing a receiver collar. People or other animals may unknowingly venture into the confinement and be bitten.

Tethering

Tethering dogs for long periods on a chain, rope, or cable is contrary to proper socialization of dogs. In 1996, the USDA issued a statement that tethering is inhumane. The majority of U.S. states have anti-tethering laws. Being tethered separates dogs physically and psychologically from members of a dog, human, or other surrogate family members. Tethered dogs become overly protective of their small territory and defensive knowing they cannot escape. Tethers can become wrapped around or over objects or tangled causing strangulation, leg injuries, or preventing the dog from escaping an attack by another dog, malicious humans, or stinging insects. Tethers can also prevent access to food or water or avoidance of being forcibly bred. Tethered dogs usually wear down the vegetation leaving only dirt or mud to lie on. In addition,

owners who tether dogs are less likely to clean the area of feces. Many tethered dogs hang themselves to death attempting to jump or climb over objects or falling off elevated surfaces. A study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control reported that tethered dogs are three times more likely to bite than dogs that are not tethered. Children under 12 years old are five times more likely to be bitten by a tethered dog. Tethering on a dog trolley, a tether attached by a slip ring to a horizontal line similar to a clothes line, permits the tether to slide along the horizontal line. This may increase the dog's territory but it does not eliminate the problems associated with tethering.

Rural Settings

It is common for people who live in rural settings to think that is appropriate to let their dogs constantly run free, but this is a risk to the health and welfare of the dogs and to people or other animals they may interact with outside the dog's property or range of voice command from its owner. When dogs are not on a leash or under voice control, they should be kenneled or inside a fence because of liability risks relating to danger they might impose to other people, animals, or property, and for their own safety against larger, more aggressive or stronger, roaming dogs or predator wildlife.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. Healthy dogs should be allowed to run at least once per day.**
- 2. Dog houses need to be fitted for the dog's body size to ensure sufficient warmth in cold weather.**
- 3. Fences for dogs should also prevent the entrance of roaming dogs.**
- 4. Tethering of dogs causes them to become more aggressive.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my recent books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 200 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.