

Outdoor Dog Runs and Houses

Our topics for this week are::

- **Proper construction of outdoor runs**
- **Essential aspects of dog houses**
- **Reasons against tethering dogs**

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 at least 3/8 inch metal 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. Some dogs are amazing climbers. If the run is 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.

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 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.

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. Tethering is an inhumane means of containing dogs outdoors and is illegal in several states in the U.S.**
- 2. Only long haired dogs in good health and that have had time to adapt to declining temperatures should be maintained in outdoor containment such as a dog house.**

3. Outdoor dog runs should have a contiguous roof to prevent escape.

More information on animal handling can be found in my 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 250 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.