

Dog Containments

Our topics for this week are:

- Dog cages
- Crates
- Runs
- Houses
- Fences
- Tethering
- Entering and exiting dog enclosures

Dog containment may be indoor or outdoor. Outdoor housing must provide protection from extremes of temperature (above 85F), air movements, moisture, light, and other climate elements.

Cages

Containment of a dog should be in a quiet area, and the front should not provide vision of animals in other cages. The size should be appropriate for the dog being contained. If the cage or crate is too large, the dog may feel soiling an end or corner is permissible. If the containment size is too small, it may restrict the dog's ability to relax and if it eliminates, cause soiling of its hair coat.

The U.S. Animal Welfare Act of 1966 states that dog cages for short-term confinement must provide a dog the ability to sit, stand up, turn around freely, and lie fully recumbent in a natural position. Flooring should be at least partial solid flooring. Dogs should never be restricted to bare wire bottom containment. This causes pressure sores that become smeared with excrement and leads to serious infections of the feet and bony points on the legs. Each dog should have at least the square of the sum of the dog's length from its nose to the base of the tail (without following body contours), plus 6 inches. This measurement provides the square inches required. The minimum square footage can be determined by using the product of the measurement divided by 144. For minimal height, at least 6 inches of room above the dog's head is required when it is normal standing position. More than standard minimal room is needed for nursing dams with puppies. A minimal exercise area of at least twice the area for the cage is also required. Ventilation should be adequate to avoid drafts, noxious or harmful odors, excessive humidity, and temperature extremes.

Transport cages for temporary enclosure during travel, or crates for short term restricted activity, can be smaller. Only enough room to stand, turn around, and lay down with its legs stretched out is sufficient room, since being crated should only occupy the inactive time of the dog's day (sleeping, naps, feeding, resting) and should never exceed six to eight hours at a time (less for puppies).

Fixed cages are generally in banks two or three cages high. Banks of dog cages should

not be positioned to face each other. Upper cages require extra vigilance to prevent a small animal from jumping in or out. Bending over to remove dogs from lower cages may intimidate dogs and result defensive attacks from fearful dogs, or be perceived as a challenge to a dominant aggressive dog. However, most dogs are anxious to escape and can be caught inside the cage at the door with a slip leash by opening the cage door just wide enough for a hand holding a slip leash to enter and apply the leash.

Dogs need environmental enrichment for mental stimulation as do all confined animals. For example, providing food-filled toys or other enrichment activities improve the behavior of shelter dogs and increases the chances of being adopted. Social interaction is also important and full body contact with compatible, healthy dogs should be permitted daily. If dogs and cats are caged in the same facility, dog and cat cages should be in separate rooms.

Crates

Portable cages include rigid clamshell transport crates that can act as dens for training and help retain body heat. Wire transport cages allow for visual contact with handlers or other dogs. Wire cages are built to collapse flat for storage when not in use. Wire cages are also easier to see into to monitor for if the cage gets soiled. In addition, it allows air circulation to reduce the risk of overheating. A solid bottom tray should always be used with wire bottomed crates. Dogs should not be forced to stay on mesh wire bottoms or they will suffer foot injuries and infections. Collars with tags should be removed from dogs in wire crates due to the risk of being caught on the wire and strangulation occurring. Soft-sided bags are convenient transport cages for cats and small dogs. However, they provide less protection from injury and can be excessively confining.

Crates can be used as a source of refuge from various stresses for dogs. Placing a towel or blanket over wire crates can provide some dogs a sense of security when in the crate. Crate training puppies can reduce the risks of several behavior problems, such as house soiling, destructive chewing, digging, unnecessary barking, howling, and separation anxiety. Crate training aids in establishing the proper bond between dogs and owners since the owner is better able to control the dog's activities. The crate door should not be closed the first time the dog enters. The dog should enter voluntarily and be able to leave on its own for a couple of days before enclosing it for extended times. Soft bedding should be provided in the crate and treats offered when the dog enters the crate. Nothing adverse (no reprimands) should occur when the dog is in the crate. The dog should never be told to "come" and then shoved into the crate. Although most dogs seek out time in their crate for rest and security, inappropriate training or excessive use of crates can lead to separation anxiety and stereotypic behaviors.

Crates should be matched to the size of the dog. A crate large enough for the dog to easily stand up, turn around, and lay on its side with its legs outstretched, but small enough to discourage the dog from soiling the crate. Growing dogs may need to have multiple crates of various size. Matching the dog's size with a crate provides the option to carry a small dog in its crate. Although crates have top handles for carrying them when empty, the handler should use both hands in carrying a crate with a dog in it to stabilize the crate's floor. The crate to be carried with a dog in it should be covered with a towel to reduce overstimulating the dog with fear or excitement.

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.

An indoor version of invisible fence is available to limit a dog's range of movements inside a house. These electroshock devices are wireless and use either a base unit with a range that is permitted before a shock occurs to the dog wearing the receiver collar, or uses a moveable transmitters that establish boundaries that if passed, causes a shock to the dog wearing the receiver collar.

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.

Putting Into and Removing Dogs from Cages and Runs

Entering an Enclosure

Doors and gates on cages and runs should always open to the outside. When putting a dog into a cage, the dog should be placed in the cage while holding onto its collar and closing the cage door onto the handler's dog restraining arm. The door is closed against the arm as the dog is released and the handler's arm is then slipped out of the cage.

When putting a dog into a run, the dog should be led in and then turned around. Trying to stand outside the run and force the dog in should be avoided. The run gate should be opened only wide enough to allow the handler's body enough room to exit sideways while blocking the dog from escaping with a handler's leg, if necessary. The handler's hands should not be used to attempt to block escape.

Exiting an Enclosure

A slip leash should be applied to the dog while it is still in the cage or run, even if it is small and will be carried. Applying the leash can be done by opening the cage or run door just wide enough to insert an arm with the leash and slip it over the dog's head. If capturing a dog in a run, the handler can carefully enter the run and apply the slip leash if an assistant can hold the run door closed after the handler enters and open it when needed.

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

- Temporary confinement for dogs must have enough room for the dog to stand, turn around, and lay down with legs outstretched.
- Crates should be a stress-free refuge for a dog.
- Dog houses should no larger than that required for a dog's normal stance, turning around, and laying down on its side so that adequate warm is provided.
- Invisible fencing does not prevent invasion by roaming dogs.
- Tethered dogs are more likely to become aggressive.

More information on animal handling is available in my book, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint* published by CRC Press. It is also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is available at www.betteranimalhandling.com

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.