

## **Tethering Dogs**

Our topics for this week are:

- **Risks to dogs that are tethered**
- **Risks to people who tether dogs**

### **Problems Caused by 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. 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.

### **Tethering and the Law**

Currently, 23 states and the District of Columbia have laws on dog tethering. The details of the laws vary from state to state, but they do have consistent major features. Some state laws allow a dog to be tethered for a reasonable period of time. California prohibits tethering a dog to a stationary object, but allows a dog to be tethered "no longer than is necessary for the person to complete a temporary task that requires the dog to be restrained for a reasonable period." More recent laws restrict the number of hours a dog can be tethered within a 24-hour period. For instance, in Nevada, it is no longer than 14 hours, in Oregon it is no longer than 10 hours, and in Massachusetts that limit is no longer than 5 hours.

Some states specify the type of tether. Hawaii and Rhode Island and several others have outlawed tethering to a choke collar, pinch collar, or prong type collar. Other states dictate the length or weight of the tether. Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania require that the tether be three times the length of the dog. Rhode Island requires that the weight of the tether be one-eighth the body weight of the dog and Washington law states that "the weight of the tether shall not unreasonably inhibit the free movement of the dog within the area allowed by the length of the tether." Many states require that the tether allow the dog unencumbered access to food, water, and shelter without becoming entangled.

Indiana defines "neglect" as restraining an animal for more than a brief period in a manner that endangers the animal's life or health by the use of a rope, chain, or tether. Tethering in a manner that causes injury or even danger to the dog, including attacks by other animals, can be classified as cruel restraint under many state laws.

Some states provide restrictions based on weather. Pennsylvania makes it a presumption of neglect if the dog is tethered for longer than 30 minutes in temperatures above 90 or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In Connecticut and Massachusetts, when a weather advisory or warning is issued by authorities, or when outdoor conditions pose an adverse risk to the health or safety of particular dog, duration of tethering cannot exceed fifteen minutes. In Louisiana, it is prohibited to tie or tether a dog or cat in a manner that exposes it to extreme weather conditions in designated emergency areas.

In Better Animal Handling's opinion, dogs should never be tethered, except for short duration with constant supervision.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects contact us at [CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com](mailto:CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com)

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

- 1. Dogs that are tethered will become more aggressive.**
- 2. Tethering is adverse to dogs' quality and duration of life**

Abby says it is time to wrap up this episode.

More information on animal handling can be found in my book, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources. My new spiral-bound handbook, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling* was recently published and can be found on Amazon as well as from other book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: [www.betteranimalhandling.com](http://www.betteranimalhandling.com) . This website has more than 100 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.