

## Chaining/Tethering



*Objective: to educate the public on the hazards of chaining dogs for long periods of time.*

### Introduction

Dogs are naturally social beings. They enjoy living with their pack whether that pack consists of other dogs, other animals, humans, or a combination. When a dog is continuously chained or tethered outside, he or she becomes lonely and bored. Because chained dogs are unsocialized, they can also become neurotic, aggressive, and territorial. Therefore, the Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia (FOHO WV) is opposed to the continuous chaining of dogs.

### The life of a chained dog

Dogs who spend their lives chained to a tree, pole, or other stationary object receive little human attention or care. They receive little to no veterinary care. In addition:

- They are forced to eat, drink, urinate, defecate, and sleep in the same small space through blistering summer heat and freezing winter cold, rain, snow, and wind. If shelter is provided, it is often nothing more than a makeshift lean-to with inadequate protection from the elements. Their food and water is often contaminated if there is even any there for them.
- A chained dog may be tormented by passers-by or attacked by domestic or wild animals as well as by insects. They may be attacked by humans,

too. They may choke themselves on their collars or their collars may become embedded in their skin. In either case, they may die of strangulation.

- They may be stolen and wind up in even worse situations—as part of a dog fighting ring, maybe even as bait in such an illegal activity.
- If a dog breaks free of his or her chain, the dog may be hit by a car, shot at, or lost forever to fend for him or herself.

Chained dogs are caught in a vicious cycle. The longer they live life at the end of a chain, the less likely they are to have human companionship, thereby making it more difficult to handle them. The more difficult they are to handle, the less likely a human will want to engage with them. They are caught in a downward spiral and may sink into a level of despair that can affect them psychologically and physically.

### The danger chained dogs pose

Because they are feeling vulnerable and threatened on a daily basis, chained dogs may lunge at anything that goes by them, posing a risk to small children, cats, rabbits, small dogs, and other small animals who may wander into their space. The result of such an encounter is often a dog bite that can be severe enough to cause permanent damage or death.

According to the Centers for Dis-

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[www.fohowv.org](http://www.fohowv.org)  
The Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia, INC. website promoting animal welfare throughout the state.

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ease Control and Prevention<sup>1</sup>,

- About 4.7 million people are bitten by dogs each year.
- Each year, 800,000 Americans seek medical attention for dog bites; half of these are children.
- Of those injured, 386,000 require treatment in an emergency department and about 16 die.
- The rate of dog bite-related injuries is highest for children ages 5 to 9 years.

While not all of these incidents involved chained dogs, chained dogs are 2.8 times more likely to bite. Additionally, approximately 25 percent of fatal dog attacks involved chained dogs.<sup>2</sup>

### Is chaining ever humane?

There are as many definitions to humane chaining as there are jurisdictions<sup>3</sup> with ordinances<sup>4</sup> covering the chaining of dogs outside. The issues most often covered in such ordinances include the number of hours

a dog can be continuously chained; under what environmental conditions; and specific standards of care regarding shelter, food, and water.

#### **If a dog is going to be chained outside:**

- Someone should be at home.
- The chain should be long enough for the dog to comfortably move around and lie down yet not to become entangled.
- The chain should be affixed to an appropriate collar or harness to allow good mobility without the chain becoming embedded in the dog's neck.
- There should be adequate shade and protection from the elements.
- The dog should be brought inside immediately if environmental conditions deteriorate or there is a threat to the dog's safety from other animals or humans.

#### **Conclusion**

Often dogs are chained outdoors because their owners have not taken the time to socialize them or train them to be obedient canine citizens indoors. For those people, we recommend they contact their local shelter to find trainers in the area who will help them turn their dog into a model canine citizen.

Some people chain their dogs outside for protection. They need to understand that anyone can harm their dog, thereby negating the protection he or she could give. Keeping a dog indoors is safer for the dog, who can still thwart intruders by his or her bark.

Keeping a large water bowl and a heavy chain at your front door may lead people to believe you have a large and possibly menacing dog, sending them elsewhere to create mayhem. Or, purchase an alarm sys-

tem to protect yourself and your dog.

Organizations such as the American Veterinary Medical Association, The Humane Society of the United States, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have stated their opposition to continual chaining, deeming it cruel, neglectful, inhumane, and unsafe for dogs and for humans, particularly children.

The USDA issued a statement in the July 2, 1996, Federal Register against chaining: *"Our experience in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act has led us to conclude that continuous confinement of dogs by a tether is inhumane. A tether significantly restricts a dog's movement. A tether can also become tangled around or hooked on the dog's shelter structure or other objects, further restricting the dog's movement and potentially causing injury."*<sup>5</sup>

Sadly, some people do not realize the importance of treating dogs with respect and compassion. They do not realize that chaining a dog is an act of cruelty. However, as more dog owners consider their dogs to be members of their family, fewer dogs will find themselves continuously chained. And as more dog owners educate others about the negative consequences of continuously chaining dogs, the number of indoor, family dogs will increase.

## **Endnotes**

1. "Dog Bite: Fact Sheet," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/dog-bites/dogbite-factsheet.html](http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/dog-bites/dogbite-factsheet.html)
2. "Dog Bites," American Humane Association, [www.americanhumane.org/animals/stop-animal-abuse/fact-sheets/dog-bites.html](http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/stop-animal-abuse/fact-sheets/dog-bites.html)
3. "State Summary Report, Animal tethering prohibitions," the American Veterinary Medical Association, [www.avma.org/Advocacy/StateAndLocal/Pages/sr-animal-tethering-prohibitions.aspx](http://www.avma.org/Advocacy/StateAndLocal/Pages/sr-animal-tethering-prohibitions.aspx)
4. Local Ordinances, Federation of Humane Organizations West Virginia, [www.fohowv.org](http://www.fohowv.org)
5. "The Facts About Chaining and Tethering," The Humane Society of the United States, [www.humanesociety.org/issues/chaining\\_tethering/facts/chaining\\_tethering\\_facts.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/chaining_tethering/facts/chaining_tethering_facts.html)