

Abuse to a dog can be more than physical...

The Backyard Dog

Dogs are social animals who crave human companionship. That's why they thrive and behave better when living indoors with their pack -- their human family members. This is substantiated by the experience of rescue volunteers and shelter workers as well as trainers, canine behaviorists, veterinarians and animal welfare associations nationwide.

Perhaps the biggest and most widely held misconception about dogs is the belief that they will be healthy and happy living only in the backyard. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Current studies in dog psychology show that dogs isolated in backyards are highly likely to develop serious behavioral problems that often result in euthanasia for the animal.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

DOGS ARE PACK ANIMALS THAT THRIVE ON COMPANIONSHIP. Much like their wolf ancestors, dogs are very social. In fact, dogs are more social than humans and need to be part of human families. When you own a dog, you become the dog's pack and he wants to be with his pack. **Forcing a dog to live outside with little or no human companionship is one of the most psychological damaging things a pet owner can do to a dog.**

DOGS ARE ALSO DEN ANIMALS, meaning they like to have a safe, quiet, and secure place to sleep, rest, and hang out, such as your house. Your dog has a wonderful ability to learn and therefore to be housetrained. A dog who resides more in your house than in the yard is a much happier, content animal, because of the security of a den and your companionship.

BACKYARD DOGS HAVE MORE BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS. Since all your dog's instincts are telling him it is not good to be left alone or isolated from his pack, your dog can become very stressed or anxious. A dog exhibits stress by digging, barking, howling or whining, chewing, escaping, and exhibiting hyperactivity. These problems can become so troublesome that your neighbors may complain about the barking, howling, property destruction, or your dog escaping.

BACKYARD DOGS ARE HARDER TO TRAIN. Considering a backyard dog does not develop a strong bond toward your family, he is harder to train than a dog allowed to be in the house with your family. This also makes him less responsive to commands.

BACKYARD DOGS MAKE LOUSY GUARD DOGS. As a dog becomes naturally protective of where he lives (his territory or turf), he will only defend the place he lives in. If he is never allowed in the house, then the house will not become a place to protect. Most people keep their valuables inside their houses, so why wouldn't you want your dog to protect the inside of your house? Unless allowed to live inside, your dog will not develop that sense of territory. He will not sound the alarm when someone tries to invade your house. It is not uncommon to hear stories of families being robbed while their backyard dog snoozed through the whole episode.

BACKYARD DOGS HAVE HIGHER RATES OF EUTHANASIA. Backyard dogs are more often given up than house dogs because they were never looked upon as family by their human pack. Sadly, that means they are easier to dispose of. Backyard dogs do not have the opportunity to become socialized to people and other dogs, and may become so fearful or even vicious that they may have to be euthanized.

WHAT CAN YOU DO:

KEEP YOUR DOG WITH YOU! At a minimum, your dog should have access to your living space whenever you are home, including sleeping inside your house at night. You do not have to spend every waking moment actively playing and talking to your dog; just the fact that your dog can lay quietly at your feet while you watch TV, work at your computer or sleep, is very important to his mental well-being.

NEVER TIE OR CHAIN YOUR DOG UP OUTSIDE. Dogs that are tied up or chained outside suffer extreme frustration which can result in hyperactivity and/or aggression against you, your family or friends. Dogs that are tied up cannot escape from other animals or people who mean to do them harm. They can also easily become entangled and do bodily harm to themselves. It has been a sad tale to hear of a dog tied outside because he was a fence jumper, only to hang himself while trying to do so! If you must keep your dog outside, provide a secure, high fence or an enclosed chain link dog run, with a top for those fence jumpers or climbers. Panels of chain link (that can be easily bolted together to provide a dog run) can be found at reasonable prices at your larger home supply stores, such as Home Depot. Provide a top with shade, a dog house for rainy weather, items to chew on, and plenty of fresh water. A dog should always be exercised before being left for the day in an enclosed area, such as a dog run or even your backyard.

THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME YOU'LL DEVOTE TO YOUR DOG. People who keep their dogs outside constantly rationalize it. They insist that they do spend time with their dogs, they do feed them, they do walk them. Spending an hour a day with your dog is not enough for his mental welfare. Be realistic! What about when it is rainy, windy, cold, or just plain too hot? Are you still spending that hour daily with your dog no matter what? Making the backyard your dog's only home does not make him a real part of the family.

DO YOU FIT THE STATISTICS? Our lives have changed. It used to be that most people did spend a lot of time in the yard; playing, working, gardening, and socializing. Now with the age of computers, televisions, and hectic schedules, we actually spend about 75% less time outdoors in our yards, and therefore less time with our devoted friend, the dog.

TRAIN YOUR DOG! If your dog is untrained, take him to training class so you can develop better communication skills and teach him how to act appropriately in the house. If you have a young puppy, get him into a puppy training and socialization class as soon as he turns 12 weeks old. Don't wait until he is six months old and has already acquired a taste for tipping over the garbage can or chewing on your rug. If you acquire an older dog, training him as soon as possible will help him adjust to his new household and your family (his new pack).

GIVE YOUR DOG A CHANCE TO BE YOUR BEST FRIEND! Don't kick him out because you think he is untrainable, unruly, or because it is good for him to be outside. Instead, take the time to make him a part of your family, a part of your pack.

2. Why Dogs Should Be Indoor Pets: Outdoor Risks, Solving Indoor Problems

When people ask, 'why shouldn't dogs be kept outside' and 'how do I teach my dog to be an indoor dog,' share this good advice, which contains guidance from 'The Great, Awful Outdoors' by canine behavior expert and author Pat Miller, published in Your Dog newsletter

Dogs like living indoors with their family. They are by nature pack animals, so keeping dogs outside denies them a place in the family pack. According to author and trainer Pat Miller, the reasons given for keeping dogs outdoors fall into two categories:

* Inappropriate dog behavior that can be managed and/or modified (example: 'the dog's not housetrained'), and

* People's preconceived notions, which can also be modified (example: 'dogs should be outside in the fresh air').

Certainly, dogs benefit from spending some time outside. But this time should consist of play sessions in the yard and walks around the neighborhood, not solitary confinement outdoors.

Problems that result from leaving dogs outdoors:

* Dogs kept outdoors are deprived of human companionship and have more trouble bonding with human family members. They have more trouble learning to interact properly with humans. And without adequate supervision and guidance from their owners, dogs can and will develop undesirable behaviors.

* Bored dogs left in yards often bark at every sound or movement to occupy themselves ... dig holes ... fence-fight with neighboring dogs and other animals ... chew and damage fencing, siding, decks and outdoor furnishings ... dig under fencing ... and climb or jump over fences. And when the owners do visit the dog in the yard, the dog is often out of control, having been starved of human companionship.

More risks:

* Escape from the yard, which can lead to being hit by a car, lost in the woods, hurt by people. Also: they can frighten and even bite people out of confusion.

* Taunting and cruelty from youths or adults on the other side of the fence

* Theft

* Poisoning.

* Neighbor complaints and threats; visits from animal control officers.

* Accidental release by a passerby, meter reader or service technician. And any resulting bites.

* Frustration from wanting to visit with passing dogs and humans, which can lead to barrier aggression, which fuels aggression towards other dogs and humans.

* Illness and chronic health problems from being out in hot, cold or wet weather.

* Sunburn or heatstroke.

* Flystrike on ears and other body parts, which can lead to open wounds and maggot infestation.

* Electrocution when digging up or chewing on wiring outside the house.

* Development of obsessive behaviors such as tail chasing, fly snapping and self-mutilation as a result of boredom and frustration.

Creative solutions to inside-out problems, courtesy of Pat Miller:

* Good manners don't just happen. The owner needs to take responsibility for helping his dog learn good behavior and house manners. That means spending some time each day in training the dog, being sure to

reward him for appropriate bathroom and other behaviors. Remember that dogs are continually looking to their people for cues, so owners must provide, look for and take opportunities to reward positive behaviors and to discourage negative ones. (Example: many owners accidentally reward dogs for jumping up by pushing the dog off. Seemingly unpleasant gestures such as pushing the dog off typically encourage repeated jumping, since the dog is just looking for attention.)

- * Enroll in a good training class that focuses on praise and other means of positive reinforcement.

- * Provide exercise each day. A tired dog is a well-behaved dog. Throw a ball with the dog. Go for long walks. Give the dog a good exercise session before you leave for work in the morning.

- * Provide the dog with lots of opportunities to display good behavior. And praise him whenever he does the right thing. Positive reinforcement leads to repetition of desired behaviors.

- * Until the dog learns good house manners, confine him in a dog-safe room, puppy pen or crate inside the house when you're not there to supervise. Baby gates as well as doors can be used to control access to various parts of your house. Be sure to leave him several safe, interactive dog toys, such as a Kong toy stuffed with some treats and a little peanut butter or cream cheese. Make sure the dog has access to fresh water, especially when you're gone for a long period. When first using a crate, teach the dog that good things happen in the crate, and reward him when he displays calm behavior.

- * Never use the crate for punishment, since that will cause the dog to develop a negative association with the crate. You can use the crate for a time-out, but keep things cheerful -- for example, if the dog gets revved up again after an exercise session ends, you might say 'Oops! Time out' and instruct him to go to the crate in a calm, upbeat voice. Miller suggests an indoor, portable tether as a good alternative to a crate for time-outs when you are home to watch the dog. A time-out should be a short, pleasant interlude for the dog.

- * If you have to be gone from the home longer than the dog can hold his or her urine, arrange with a dog walking service or neighbor to take the dog out. Some people have taught dogs (usually small breeds) to use a box containing commercial dog litter or Astroturf that can be hosed off.

- * Avoid leaving food, garbage and debris in areas that your dog can access. Clear off counters and put trash and garbage cans in closets, or use cans with tight-fitting lids.

- * If fleas are a problem, use a good, modern form of flea control, such as the easy-to-use topical treatments that include Frontline and K9 Advantix.

- * If someone in the house has allergies to animals, the best moves are to see an allergy specialist and to follow practices for reducing the chance of allergic reactions. These include vacuuming, keeping the dog off human furniture, washing hands after touching the dog, etc. You can find free allergy tips on the web.

3. Outside Dogs: Why Protection is No Excuse

by Dennis Fetko, PhD

www.drtdog.com

Unless you're medically intolerant of the dog (and therefore can't take care of him in a medical emergency, so you shouldn't have the dog anyway), making a dog stay outside is a costly waste. If he's for protection, what do you think I want to steal -- your lawn?

When you leave, do you put your valuables and your kids out in your yard? Just what is the dog protecting out there? Most dogs kept outside cause far more nuisance complaints from barking and escaping than any deterrent to intrusion. Such complaints cause teasing, antagonism, release and poisoning. With your dog a helpless victim, it's no laughing matter.

If I'm a crook and your dog is out, your fence protects ME, not your possessions or your dog. If I just open the gate, 9 out of 10 dogs will run off! I can safely shoot, stab, spear, poison, snare, strangle them, or dart through the fence and you just lost your dog AND everything I steal!

If he's tied up and I keep out of reach, he's useless. He'll bark, but outside dogs bark so much, they're usually ignored. But let a dog hit the other side of a door or window I'm breaking into, and I'm GONE! I can't hurt the dog until he can hurt me, and nothing you own is worth my arm. Deterrence is effective protection.

Protection and aggression are not the same. Protection is defensive, reactive, often passive, and threatens or injures no one. Aggression is active, harmful and offensive, threatens all and benefits none. Yard dogs often develop far more aggression than protectivity because everyone who passes by or enters has already violated the territory that dog has marked dozens of times a day for years. That's not protection, it's not desirable and it overlooks two facts of life today:

First, property owners have implied social contracts with others in the community. Letter carriers, paper boys, delivery people, law enforcement, emergency medical personnel, meter readers and others are allowed near and at times on your property without your specific permission. And sure that ten-year-old was not supposed to jump your fence after his Frisbee; but neither you nor your dog are allowed to cause him injury if he does. Imagine this: A neighbor looks into your yard or window and sees you, your wife or child laying on the floor in a pool of blood. They call 9-1-1 and your dog prevents paramedics from assisting! Should they shoot your dog or just let you die?

Great choice.

Second, even if the intruder is a criminal, few places allow you or your dog to cause physical injury to prevent property loss. Convicted felons have sued the dog's owner from jail and won more in the suit than they ever could have stolen! Appalling? True.

And don't be foolish enough to believe your homeowner's insurance will cover the loss. Now you see why many feel that an outside dog is a no-brainer.

The more a dog is outdoors, the less behavioral control you have. It's easier to solve four or five indoor problems than one outdoor problem. The reason is valid and simple: The more you control the stimuli that reaches your dog, the more you control the responses. You've got a lot more control over your living room than you do over your entire county! When your dog is bored, but teased by every dog, cat, bird, squirrel, motorcycle, paperboy, airplane, firecracker and backfiring truck in the county, OF COURSE he'll dig, chew, and bark.

Would you sit still all day everyday? Do you want unnecessary medical fees and parasites, especially as the dog ages?

When a dog is alone indoors, you are still 30% there because your scent and things he associates with you, constantly remind the dog of you and your training. When he's out, your dog is alone whether

you're home or not. Do you really expect him to keep YOU in mind while the entire world teases, distracts and stimulates him?

The media is full of stories about the family dog saving everyone's life during a fire. How many people, including children, would be dead today if those dogs were kept outside? SURE -- you ALWAYS get up to investigate every time your yard dog barks. And I've got this bridge.

An outdoor dog has an address, not a home. Dogs offer real value as companion animals. Stop behavior problems and start enjoying real protection and companionship. Bring your dogs inside.

4. Make a Difference for the Backyard Dog

You can use the other articles and links in this tip sheet to educate other dog owners and persuade them to let their dogs live indoors. But what if the neighbor absolutely refuses? You'll find guidance in this article, by cruelty specialist Judy McClain, and in the linked articles noted below about Helping Abused Animals and Chained Dogs.

As Helen Keller said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

Your help is needed. You can make a difference. Most of our cruelty calls are for the backyard dog. If you know of a backyard dog, please check to make sure it has proper shelter. With winter approaching now is the time to be the voice for those that can't speak for themselves.

The law requires that the outdoor dog has proper protection from the weather. Dogs can suffer from frostbite, exposure, and dehydration when water freezes.

A doghouse should be large enough for the dog to stand up, lie down, and stretch out without touching the sides or top but not too large that it can't hold its own body heat. The doghouse should be waterproof and at least 2 inches off the ground. Also it should have a door flap or windbreaker on the entrance during the winter months. The doghouse should have dry bedding (straw or wood shavings are best because blankets and towels tend to hold water and can freeze).

Water should be available for the dog at all times and it should be given adequate food, as dogs need more calories in the winter to increase their body heat. The doghouse should also be in a location where the dog has access to shade from the sun.

The ideal situation for any dog is to be part of the family and live indoors, but some people, for various reasons, don't bring their animals inside. Please make a difference for outdoor dogs and make sure they have adequate shelter. If you know of an animal that is living under substandard care, report the situation to your county's humane society. For example, Prince George's County SPCA/Humane Society's cruelty line is 301-262-5625; press 1 for cruelty/neglect.

5. More Free Resources:

Materials you can use to help backyard and other neglected dogs

<http://www.helpinganimals.com/angel-bydpack.html>

Website about helping chained and other dogs in need

<http://www.dogsdeservebetter.com>

How to help abused animals in your neighborhood

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_HelpingAbusedAnimals.php

Helping chained dogs

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_Chaining.php

Housebreaking a dog who lived outside

<http://www.VeterinaryPartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=1070>

For more Dog Tips and other information about pet care, adoption and the work PAW does, visit our website at: www.paw-rescue.org

Partnership for Animal Welfare
P.O. Box 1074, Greenbelt, MD 20768

This tip sheet includes resources to help educate people with outdoor dogs and owners in general.

1. The Backyard Dog: Guide for owners who leave dogs outside
2. Why Dogs Should Be Indoor Pets: Outdoor Risks, Solving Indoor Problems
3. Outside Dogs: Why Protection is No Excuse
4. Make a Difference for the Backyard Dog
5. Other Free Resources to Help Neglected Outdoor Dogs

1. The Backyard Dog

by the Humane Society of Silicon Valley

PDF brochure for downloading at http://www.scvhumane.org/behavior/dog/backyard_dog.pdf