



10 questions about tethered dogs

1. What is a tethered or chained dog?

A dog that is tethered with chain, rope or cable to a stationary object, usually in a back yard.

2. What is wrong with tethering a dog?

Dogs are social beings who crave and thrive on companionship and interaction with other people and animals. Left for hours, days, months and even years on a chain, dogs suffer immense psychological damage. They can become aggressive, anxious and neurotic through lack of socialization.

Tethering a dog can also bring

physical harm to the animal if the chain or collar is too tight and becomes embedded in the neck or if the tether gets tangled around other objects and the dog chokes or is strangled to death. Tethered dogs are also susceptible to attacks by other dogs and animals because they can't escape and are often exposed to the elements because their shelter is inadequate, or they become entangled and can't reach it.

3. Why do people tether dogs?

Sometimes people tether their dogs as a means to protect their property, reasoning that the dog will bark to alert them of visitors,

or will deter visitors altogether by its presence. The BC SPCA strongly discourages the use of dogs merely as “alarm systems” – dogs are sentient beings with physical, social and emotional needs. However, experience shows that inside dogs – who have bonded with their human “pack” – are actually more likely to protect their home and family by barking than dogs who are banished to back yards and therefore have little or no connection to the family.

In other cases, dog guardians have determined that they don't

have enough time or patience for their pet and rather than address inappropriate behaviours such as jumping up or eliminating in the house, they deal with the problem by banishing their former family pet to the back yard. If you don't have time for your dog, don't sentence him to life on a chain; find a home where your pet will get the attention and care he or she needs. If you have explored all options and can't find an appropriate home, bring your dog to an SPCA shelter to be adopted by a new, loving family.

4. But what about people who only tether their dogs sometimes?

If you must leave your pet outside alone for brief periods, ensure he has adequate shelter available to him. Rather than tethering him, consider a suitable pen to meet his needs, or even a pulley system that would allow him more movement. If you still insist on using a tether, ensure there is no way he can become entangled in other objects and never, ever use a choke chain.

5. I would rather leave my dog loose in the yard, but he keeps running away, so I tether him.

Ideally, you should keep your dog in the house. If you can't, consider installing a top extension that looms inward at a 45-degree angle to prevent your pet from jumping over the fence; if he digs to escape, line the fence with rocks or bury chicken wire a foot under the soil where the fence meets the ground (bend sharp edges inward). If he still wants to escape, provide him with plenty of toys and exercise (walks) so he can focus his energy positively. And remember to spay or neuter your dog; an altered pet is less likely to roam.

6. Are tethered dogs aggressive?

According to the Humane Society of the United States (humanesociety.org), a tethered

dog is nearly three times as likely to bite as dogs who are not tethered. Tethered dogs are generally unsocialized and feel naturally defensive due to being confined.

7. But when I was a kid, our dog lived on a tether and he was perfectly fine.

Along with the times, attitudes change – and so does research. Studies show that dogs need companionship and suffer considerably in the absence of it. They become lonely, frustrated, anxious and aggressive from all the hours spent alone. Your childhood pet may have suffered silently.



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8. Tethering a dog isn't illegal. Does the SPCA really have any power to prevent people from doing so?

Tethering can lead to physical, psychological or emotional distress that can be pursued by BC SPCA special constables through the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. It's also important to note that tethering a dog can lead to other problems that could be identified as cruelty under the act: Sporadic feeding, overturned water bowls, inadequate vet care, inadequate shelter, lack of exercise and exposure to extreme temperatures. In cases where an animal meets the definition of distress under the act and the guardian refuses to take steps to remedy the situation, SPCA constables have the power to apply for a warrant and seize the animal. In every case, SPCA constables work with pet guardians to educate

them about their animal's needs and encourage them to improve conditions for the animal.

9. There is a tethered dog in my neighbourhood who I think is suffering. What do I do?

If you have an amicable relationship with your neighbour, talk to him about his pet and print off the materials in this toolkit to leave with him. Many pet guardians want to do the right thing for their pet but do not have the proper information. If you believe an animal is in distress or danger from tethering, call your local BC SPCA shelter or visit spca.bc.ca/about/IncidentReport.asp.

10. What can I do in general about the plight of tethered dogs?

Talk about it. Tell your friends, family members and neighbours how you feel; lobby local legislators to enact cruelty laws to specifically deal with tethered dogs; write a letter to the editor of your local paper; write your council, MLA and MP; and above all, never tether your dog.

