

Yard Fences for Dogs

Our topics for this week are::

- **Mesh wire fencing**
- **Invisible fences**
- **Tethering as an alternative to fencing**

Fences for dogs should prevent escape or unwanted entry by dogs. Good fences for dogs allow exercise and mental enrichments for dogs.

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.

Plank fencing is an insufficient barrier prevent any able bodied dog to dig out of or into the yard.

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.

For these reasons, we do not recommend invisible fencing for dogs.

Tethering

Tethering dogs is often used as a low cost alternative to fencing. 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. We recommend never tethering dogs.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

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

- 1. Mesh wire fencing is preferred fencing for dogs**
- 2. Invisible fence is an unreliable means of containment for dogs**
- 3. Dogs should not be tethered**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 250 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.