

The Trouble With Tethered Dogs

by Heather Reimer, Virden Pet Network

There's a sweet, gentle dog who spends her entire life, winter and summer, at the end of a chain in her Virden back yard. She's not dangerous or aggressive. In fact, she loves to play, cuddle, and go for walks – things she rarely gets to do. So she barks. And barks. And barks.

When dogs are bored, lonely, or deprived of exercise, they often resort to annoying behaviors like barking or, worse, destructive behaviors like digging, chewing, nipping or biting.

Sadly, some owners get rid of their dogs when they "go bad", blaming the animal when their own neglect is at fault.

An adult dog can be as intelligent as a two-year-old child. Imagine keeping a toddler apart from his family, deprived of love and attention, being throw food once in a while, and then watching the door slam shut again.

It's not so much being tethered that does the harm, it's the neglect. A lack of companionship, exercise and mental stimulation can lead to all sorts of problems in canines including depression, aggression, and anti-social behavior.

Animal behavior consultant Steve Dale says, "A backyard is not a babysitter.... More than anything, your dog wants to be with her family. Keeping dogs tethered in backyards is downright inhumane."

Tethers get tangled up, leaving dogs unable to reach food, water and shelter. A few years ago, there was a case in rural Western Manitoba of a dog left tied to the deck while his owners went away for the weekend. He jumped over the deck railing and hanged himself. And there are frequent reports of tethered dogs that get so frustrated, they attack innocent bystanders.

Some dogs really are dangerous and need to be restrained. But the ones who aren't can be kept happy, well-adjusted companions fairly simply: Play with them. Walk them. Or hire someone to exercise them. Make your pet part of your family by involving him/her in your daily activities. And if you see a dog being neglected or abused, report it to authorities.