



Caring Hands Humane Society

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WHAT DOGS WANT

A dog is loving, loyal and intelligent, “mans best friend.” Dogs want nothing more than to be a part of the family, giving unconditional love in return. So often a new puppy is brought home and at first his new family is filled with joy. The children spend countless hours playing with him and he can always be found snuggling in their arms, asleep at night. He is treated like a member of the family and he feels like he belongs.

Then as he grows into adulthood things slowly begin to change. He has lost his puppyish charms and the family begins to tire of the constant attention he needs. Eager to please yet failing to receive the proper obedience training required he never learns what type of behavior is expected from him. As he grows larger his playful romping becomes to rough for the children and annoying to the parents. In time he becomes banished to the backyard where a small six by ten foot dirt area becomes his new home.

Out of sight, out of mind, visits from the family become few and far between. Sure he is given food and water but, aside from a hurried pat on the head at feeding time he spends all of his days and nights in solitude. Bored, frustrated and lonely he waits for even the briefest showing of attention, depressed at his isolation from the family he had come to need and love.

Social Animals

Everyone would agree intentional physical abuse of an animal is a terrible thing. Yet we don't think twice about confining our dogs outside. This is neglect and is as devastating and painful to a dog as corporal punishment. As a society, we have yet to recognize and appreciate the emotional and psychological needs of animals. As a result, our laws demand that an animal receive the basic requirements of shelter and sustenance however there is no way to ensure they receive love and attention. The absence of affection and attention becomes tragic for the dog. Dogs, like humans are pack animals and to remain psychologically healthy, like us they need to socialize. Since domestication dogs have come to consider humans as their family and we are their surrogate pack. Both people and dogs are den animals which is why dogs can be housetrained so easily. Like us, they want shelter in a safe secure den (our homes). Because of the need to socialize and the need for a den, keeping a dog isolated in the backyard goes against his most basic instincts.

The thwarting of these needs results in miserable, lonely dogs who exhibit aberrant and annoying traits, such as persistent barking and whining. These behaviors which are the dogs' way of pleading for attention are often met with hostility by the dogs' human

family, which hurls insults and sometimes objects at the dog, in a misguided attempt to quiet the animal. This interaction will further fuel the dogs' sense of rejection and fosters in the human a resentment of the animal.

Chaining

Chaining has become a widely accepted form of containment. In reality it is cruel and will damage your dogs' health and disposition. Besides suffering the isolation from his pack (family) and den (house), the chained dog suffers the added frustration of not being able to act out the most basic behaviors of running around and sniffing his own backyard. The small circle he can move about carries the stench of animal waste even if the feces are routinely removed; this draws flies making your dog miserable and provides an excellent breeding ground for parasites. Continually frustrated with their lack of mobility they react with enthusiasm such as dashing around the yard when finally released, or he may run away. In reality this is a logical response to the continued isolation and restriction of movement to which he has been subjected. Why should he have any interest in learning to come when you call? He wants to get as far as he can before he is confined again. Unfortunately this is often interpreted as signs of an "unruly" or "dumb" dog and when you finally get him back you punish him even more, making the problem worse. Chained dogs show severe temperament disorders such as hyperactivity and territoriality often becoming aggressive or fearful. Unable to escape danger they display aggressive behavior as a means of self defense, quick to bite yet timid when handled. These are all signs of social deprivation making him become mentally ill.

Time for a Change

Dogs offer undying loyalty and unconditional love. In return all they ask for is a sense of belonging. The realities of modern life, as well as the dogs' own needs often require they spend some part of the day in the backyard. But with plenty of love, attention and affection they can be healthy, happy companions. To banish the dog permanently to the backyard while the rest of the family enjoy one another inside is a betrayal of this loving pact and that is no way to treat "mans best friend".

CHHS Staff