

What to Do About a Dog Who's Left Outside

The HSUS strongly recommends that all pets be kept indoors with the family. We do not discourage pet owners from letting their dogs spend time outside, as long as the animals are supervised and under control at all times. But leaving a dog outside for long periods, especially if he or she is chained or otherwise tethered, can be physically, emotionally, and behaviorally detrimental. Dogs need companionship, care, exercise, and attention.

Tethering or otherwise leaving a dog outside for an extended period without supervision not only deprives the animal of these things, but can also lead to behavior problems (including aggression). It may place the dog in serious physical danger: A confined or tethered dog is unable to escape the harsh effects of weather (heat, cold, storms, etc.), attack by other animals, or theft or abuse by humans. The HSUS receives countless calls and letters from pet owners and neighbors about dogs who have died from exposure or been stolen, abused, or even killed while left tied outside.

If you are concerned about a dog who is frequently tethered or otherwise left outside without proper shelter, food, or water, please contact your local humane society or animal control agency. A growing number of anti-cruelty laws and ordinances include "adequate care standards" that make it illegal to keep a dog outside without proper shelter in inclement weather or dangerous temperatures. (A few communities have even enacted ordinances prohibiting the tethering of dogs.)

Your local animal care and control organization will be familiar with the laws and ordinances that apply to your particular area and situation. Even if the dog's owner is not violating any laws, an animal control officer or cruelty investigator may be able to persuade and empower the dog owner to take steps to improve the situation. In some instances, persuading the individual to voluntarily give up the dog is the best solution for the animal.

You can find the name and number of your local humane organization or animal control agency by checking the Yellow Pages under "animal shelter," "humane society," or "animal control," or by calling Information.

If you are interested in getting a law enacted to ban the practice of tethering in your community, or if you would like to strengthen other animal protection laws already in place, please contact The HSUS at 2100 L Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20037; 202-452-1100.