

What are anti-tethering or anti-chaining laws?

Anti-tethering and anti-chaining laws make tethering illegal. Tethering is when a dog is fixed to a single point on the owner's property either permanently or for long periods of time. Often, the dog is tethered to a tree or another heavy object in the owner's yard.

The length of the chain or rope can vary. Some dogs might be chained and only able to move a few feet in any direction. Other tethered dogs might be on a long chain and have more freedom. In the past, some dogs were tied up with actual chains, hence the name "anti-chaining." Today, it's common to see dogs tied up with rope or another thin material. The terms "tethering" and "chaining" include all the ways that a dog might be restrained.

Does my community need an anti-tethering law?

Yes! Anti-tethering laws improve public safety.

A key factor in dog bites and dog bite-related fatalities is the owner's treatment of the dog. A 2013 study by the National Canine Research Council introduced the idea of a "family dog" versus a "resident dog."¹ A resident dog is defined as "a dog, whether confined within the dwelling or otherwise, whose owners isolated them from regular, positive human interactions." A "family dog" is defined as a "dog whose owners kept them in or near the home and also integrated them into the family unit." Over 76% of dog bite-related fatalities involved a "resident dog."² Tethering is common with "resident dogs" because the dog is isolated from human contact and is less likely to form a bond with his owner.

A disproportionate number of tethered dogs are involved in dog bites:

- A study in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association found that 17% of reported dog bites (including dog bite-related fatalities) involved a dog who was tethered or chained to a single point on the owner's property.³
- A review of dog bite incidents reported to different South Carolina health departments revealed that 8 out of 16 severe attacks involved a tethered dog.⁴
- Over the last fifty years, 25% of dog bite-related fatalities were committed by chained dogs.⁵

We already have a law against animal cruelty. Why do we need to pass another law?

Anti-cruelty laws do not effectively address problems with tethering. Unfortunately, in many states it is difficult and time-consuming for animal control officers to prove that animal abuse is occurring. All over the country, concerned citizens call their local police department or animal control officer every day to report chained dogs. Officers may investigate the situation but they are often unable to do anything. This not only wastes municipal resources, it frustrates and angers citizens worried about the animal's welfare.

Officers don't have the resources to watch a single house for 24 hours to determine how long the dog is actually being tethered and whether he is being given fresh food and water. A law that makes tethering illegal allows officers to quickly respond and take action.

Can't we just make sure people aren't tethering in a cruel way?

Some communities have passed vague laws that prohibit tethering in a "cruel manner" or for longer than 12 hours. A law that is very open-ended isn't effective nor is it helpful to animal control officers because it's hard to prove violations. Outlawing tethering is a bright-line rule that empowers law enforcement to cite or charge violators, remove animals in distress, and protect public safety.

For whatever reason, if a community is unable to completely prohibit tethering, the next best option is to put very clear conditions on it. For example, in August 2016, Massachusetts passed a law banning tethering from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. and when a weather advisory or warning has been issued.⁶ Under this law, an officer does not have to wait or build a case. If a person leaves their dog tethered at 10:30 p.m., the officer can immediately remove the animal.

Is tethering humane for dogs?

Psychological Well-Being

Chained dogs suffer intense psychological damage. Dogs are social creatures who require affection and interaction with humans and/or other companion animals. Isolation results in chronic boredom and anxiety. Many tethered dogs become more aggressive over time. *(continued on page 3)*

Is tethering humane for dogs? *(cont.)*

Physical Health

Tethered dogs have no protection against weather, attacking animals, and stinging insects. Some dogs are provided with minimal shelter but many others are not. Every year, tethered dogs die of heat stroke in the summer and freeze to death in the winter. It's a short, painful life. Tethering also leaves dogs vulnerable to harassment and abuse from passersby. The dog cannot escape if she is teased, beaten, or rocks are thrown at her.

Tethered dogs frequently suffer from open sores where their collar has irritated their skin. Sometimes, the collar becomes embedded in a dog's neck, an incredibly painful condition. Infected sores can result in death. Tethers can also become entangled if the dog struggles to move beyond the small area to which he's confined. Many dogs have died after accidentally hanging themselves over fences. Chained dogs are forced to eat, sleep, defecate, and urinate in a single place. Due to the constant pacing, the ground is usually bare and becomes muddy in the rain.

Finally, tethered dogs tend to be cared for less than dogs living in a home. Many dogs are not given fresh, clean water or food. They don't receive exercise and rarely see a veterinarian. As a result, chained dogs frequently suffer from ticks, fleas, heartworm, and other diseases easily prevented with routine care.

I am scared of dogs. Why should I support anti-tethering laws?

Tethering is a public safety hazard. Tethered dogs are more likely to become aggressive over time. This is partly because a tethered dog can't flee to safety if she's attacked (or thinks she will be attacked). The dog can't escape the threat, and she feels she has no choice but to protect herself. Tethered dogs are a risk to children, who are more likely to approach unknown animals. So while people approach the issue from different angles, those who love dogs and those who'd prefer dogs keep their distance can agree that tethering should be illegal.

Aren't anti-tethering laws unfair to people without fences or enclosed yards?

While an anti-tethering law may inconvenience a few people, the benefits outweigh the costs. The local government must weigh public safety against a small group of individuals who prefer to keep their dogs chained. There is no public benefit to tethering. Public safety should always win out. Dog owners may either build a fence, enclose the yard, or keep their dogs inside. For people of limited means, efforts should be made to connect them to a local nonprofit that builds fences for previously tethered dogs.

Do any national animal protection groups oppose tethering?

Virtually all major animal protection organizations oppose tethering.

Do non-animal protection groups oppose tethering?

Yes. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) advises against tethering. In 1997, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service published a rule stating,

“Our experience in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act has led us to conclude that permanently tethering a dog as a means of primary enclosure is not a humane practice that is in the animal’s best interest.”⁷

And a frequently cited article in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association News, advises, “Confine your dog in a fenced yard or dog run when it is not in the house. Never tether or chain your dog because this can contribute to aggressive behavior.”⁸

Public safety departments also oppose tethering. In response to a request from the legislature, the New Mexico Department of Public Safety studied dog tethering in terms of both public safety and dog welfare. The department determined that tethering was not in the best interest of either.⁹

What if I want a guard dog?

Some people tether their dogs in front of their house in the hopes that the dog will alert them to trespassers and scare people from entering their property. In reality, dogs who have bonded with their families are much more likely to alert their owners to potential trespassers. Also, most tethered dogs won't be able to distinguish between family members and strangers because they haven't bonded to the owner.

Do other communities have anti-tethering laws?

Yes, dozens of cities and states either prohibit tethering or put restrictions on it. In California, people are not allowed to "tether, fasten, chain, tie, or restrain a dog to any dog house, tree, fence, or other stationary object" unless the person is working on a temporary task that requires the dog to be tethered for under three hours.¹⁰

Animal control professionals support anti-tethering laws because they see firsthand the negative impacts of tethering. Arlington, Texas passed an anti-tethering ordinance in 2012, in part because an elderly woman was attacked by a tethered dog. Her injuries were severe, ranging from deep bite wounds to a fractured hip. The city's animal services field supervisor noted, "We want Arlington to be a place where people walk down the street and feel safe."¹¹ In Phoenix, Arizona, the city council passed an anti-tethering law in the spring of 2016. Dr. Steve Hansen, the CEO of The Arizona Humane Society, celebrated the law saying, "Every year, we field thousands of calls from concerned neighbors about a dog that's tied up, outside, in distress. This ordinance allows us to contact the owners, correct the situation and work with law enforcement to cite those that don't improve the conditions of their pets."¹²

These are just a few examples. More and more communities pass anti-tethering ordinances every day.

The Fine Print (sources)

1. Patronek, G.J., Sacks, J.J., Delise, K.M., Cleary, D.V., & Marder, A.R. (2013). Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 243(12), 1726-1736. *(Continued on page 6)*



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The Fine Print (sources) *(cont.)*

2. Patronek (2013).
3. Jeffery J. Sacks, et al., "Breeds of Dogs Involved in Fatal Human Attacks in the US Between 1979 and 1998," Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 15 Sept. 2000. 11
4. Severe Attacks by Dogs: Characteristics of the Dogs, the Victims, and the Attack Setting," Public Health Reports January-February 1985; 100(1):55
5. Delise, Karen. Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics. Anubis Press, 2002. Print.
6. Massachusetts, Bill S. 2369, 2016, available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S2369>
7. United States Department of Agriculture, "Final Tethering Rule," Federal Register, Rules and Regulations (Washington: GPO Aug. 13, 1997) 62(156): 43273-43275.
8. Veterinarians Team Up with Plastic Surgeons for Dog Bite Prevention Week, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association News, 15 May 2003.
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11. Sarah Bahari, New Ordinance Aims to Protect People and Pets, Arlington, 2012, available at: <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/news/2012/05/29/new-ordinance-aims-to-protect-people-and-pets/>

Anti-tethering laws make communities safer for people and dogs. Support anti-tethering laws in your community!



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