

# outdoor dog safety

## *canine health*

Dogs love to be outside, especially if you are out there with them. Keep your dog safe by following a few simple guidelines to make outdoor time fun for both of you.

### **Before they go out:**

Just like you, your dog should always have some form of identification with them whenever they go out.

### **Identification tags:**

Dogs wearing ID tags are immediately recognized as belonging to someone, rather than thought of as strays. Dogs should wear a flat buckle collar at all times with ID tag, city license and rabies tag attached. Petco carries several types of ID tags, including tags that can be engraved.

### **Microchip:**

A tiny chip the size and shape of a grain of rice is injected under your dog's skin between the shoulder blades. The number carried by the chip is then registered with the manufacturer, local animal control, a nationwide agency or all three agencies. A chip cannot be lost like a collar. Shelters and veterinarians have scanners that read the number on the chip and can call the registry or manufacturer to get the pet parent's name and number. Be sure to change your registration information if you move.

### **Tattoo:**

Not used as often since the development of microchips, your dog can also be tattooed and registered. Guide Dogs for the Blind puts a tattoo in each ear of their dogs. Tattoos can also be placed on the inside of the dog's rear leg. The drawback to this identification method is that shelter workers or



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

strangers are unlikely to roll the dog over or examine them closely for fear of being bitten. Different registries use various types of numbering systems and often don't cross-register. Numbering systems include the dog's AKC registration number, a phone number or a number given by the registry.

### **A fenced yard:**

A securely fenced yard is the best option for outside confinement. Always make sure your fence is high enough that your dog cannot jump over it. Walk along your fence line and look at it through a dog's eyes. Attach wire mesh fencing to the bottom of the fence if there are spaces where they will be tempted to dig out. Burying wire mesh fencing several inches deep will help discourage digging. Repair any loose boards or chain-link sections. Move doghouses or storage sheds out from the fence to prevent escape by climbing.

Use a clip on gate latches to remind others to secure the gate when they leave. Some dogs can learn how to flip up a latch on their own.

Do you have a swimming pool? Either fence the dog away from the pool or teach them how to get out. Go in the pool with them and teach them where the steps are. Be sure they can get out on their own. If you have a pool cover, a dog can get trapped underneath it and drown. Is there shade? Hot summer days can cause heatstroke in dogs as well as people. Be sure to leave lots of water in a cool place.

Pick up the kids' toys to prevent destruction and chewing. Smaller toys can be swallowed and cause an intestinal obstruction that requires surgery. If your dog is likely to chew, remove garden hoses and protect wiring from the air conditioner or heating unit. Remove garden tools and always lock up chemicals.

A dog door that allows your dog to go in and out as they please offers the best of all worlds when you are not home. Your dog won't feel so isolated when they can come

inside and sleep in their favorite places.

It is not recommended to leave a dog in the backyard all day, but if you must, try leaving them alone outside for an hour or so and observe their behavior. Some dogs are used to being alone while their pet parents are at work. Others become stressed in a new situation and need to be introduced to the backyard routine gradually. Dogs that are prone to sunburn (white fur with pink skin) should not be left outside during peak sun hours—even in the shade, they can become sunburned from reflected UV radiation.

### **Other confinement options**

#### **Dog run:**

A chain-link kennel with a roof or shade screen is a good alternative when you can't have a fence or if the dog is a fence jumper. It is also a good solution if you have a pool. Be sure the kennel has shade, water and protection from rain and snow. Get your dog used to it gradually and be sure they aren't sitting in there barking all day when you are gone. Don't leave a dog in a dog run 24 hours a day; they need company, exercise and mental stimulation that a dog run can't provide.

#### **Tie-out:**

This is recommended as a temporary containment method only. Leaving a dog tied out promotes barking and aggression. They see everything happening around them, yet they can't join in. They also can't escape and, if threatened, may bite to protect themselves from real or imagined danger. Dogs that are tied out can learn to pull on a leash when walked. They are used to the tension of the chain and pull against it. A chain might get tangled and prevent your dog from getting to water or shade. They can also get tangled in the chain and become injured.

#### **Electronic fence:**

This is a wire buried underground. Your dog wears a collar that gives them a mild correction if they go over the wire boundary. If your dog is properly trained to understand the boundaries and why they are

getting corrected this method may work. The downside is that you must be sure the batteries in the collar don't die and that the underground wire connection is working. Other dogs and wild animals can still enter your property, which means your dog isn't protected from intruders, including possible dog thieves.

### **Garage:**

A dog run in the garage with a pet door to the outside provides shelter and access for your dog to relieve themselves. However, leaving your dog in the garage can be a fatal decision. Dogs are attracted to the smell of anti-freeze and some poisons (both are often stored in the garage) and may even knock over shelves to get to them. Dog-proofing your garage is a big job, but necessary. Aerosol cans, fertilizers, tools and chemicals are all potential dangers.

Summer temperatures can go well over 100°F in an airless, closed-up garage. The heat can be worse than outdoors because there is no air circulation. Check the temperature in your garage at midday on a hot day before leaving your dog inside.

**Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please contact your veterinarian.**