



MEASURE: HB 2783  
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H AG & NAT RESOURCES  
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To Whom it May Concern:

I am an animal behavior-focused veterinarian practicing in Portland, OR. My behavior background spans over 20 years, with a focus on dog and cat behavior problems. I earned my Masters of Science and PhD studying and researching different aspects of companion animal behavior, then went on to receive my veterinary degree. I work on a daily basis with dogs who have a wide range of behavioral problems, ranging from generalized anxiety, fears and phobias to aggression and repetitive behaviors.

When considering the behavioral effects of long-term tethering of dogs, I am especially concerned about three primary components:

1) **Possibility of severe injury or death, and the associated physical and mental trauma.**

Dogs on tethers can become tangled in it, and the tether itself can become tangled in the environment. Such tangling can cause physical harm to and fear in the dog. It can also prevent the dog from accessing food, water and shelter for extended periods of time.

I have personally rescued a tethered puppy who, upon climbing some stairs, fell through the gap between the stairs. The tether was caught on the upper stair that the puppy was on. It was barely long enough to allow him to reach his hind paws to the ground, causing him to slowly strangle. Not only was this incident physically harmful, but the puppy was highly traumatized as well, showing strong fear signs including frantic vocalizations, struggling and eliminating on himself until I arrived.

2) **Lack of social interaction.** As social animals, dogs generally enjoy the company of others. Social isolation has been shown to have negative physiologic and behavioral consequences in a wide range of mammalian species. It has been known for a very long time that very young puppies raised in semi-isolated conditions show abnormal behavior and changes to their brain chemistry (Agrawal et al). Adequate social interaction is necessary for appropriate development and maintenance of behavior.

Tethered dogs may also not be adequately socialized, resulting in fear of people, sounds, or other stimuli that she may experience while on the tether. Unsocialized dogs are typically fearful of new stimuli, and can become aggressive in the right circumstances (see below). In a long-term tethering situation there is a significant potential of inadequate social interaction for the dog's mental development and well-being since the dog is limited in where it can go and cannot initiate social interactions on

his own.

- 3) **Potential for aggression.** Tethered dogs can become very frustrated by being held back from the people that they want to interact with. That, plus the tendency for most dogs to exhibit territorial behavior can build on each other to create aggression. An unsocialized dog may also have a fear component to his territorial behavior. A person can potentially walk up to these dogs and try to interact with them. It is not surprising then that people coming within reach of the dog's tether can be at significant risk for a bite.

Often the people most at risk of dog bites are children. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, children are the most common victims of dog attacks. According to dog bite statistics, 70% of fatal dog attacks and more than half of bite wounds requiring medical attention involve children (AVMA). Finally, 53% of 111 cases in which a child was bitten by a non-family dog involved territorial behavior, and most bites of unfamiliar dogs occurred outside (Reisner et al). Because of the generally increased risk of children for bites, and the high percentage of cases where territorial guarding while outside played a role, tethering of dogs is a society safety risk.

Because of these risks to a tethered dog's mental as well as physical well-being, long-term unsupervised tethering should not be allowed.

I welcome further questions.

Regards,



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#### References

The American Veterinary Medical Association Task Force on Canine Aggression and Humane-Canine Interaction, "A Community Approach to Dog Bite Prevention, *Amer Vet Med Assoc*; 2001; 218: 1732-1749.

Agrawal , HC, et al. Neurochemical and behavioral effects of isolation-rearing in the dog. *Life Sciences*; 1967; 6: 71-78

Reisner, IL, et al. , Behavioral assessment of child-directed canine aggression. *Inj Prev* 2007;13:348-351.