

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT OUTSIDE DOGS...

Those of us who work in the animal welfare field have difficulty understanding the concept of the "outside dog".

When our staff conduct adoption interviews, potential owners are reminded that dogs are companion, "pack" animals that crave the attention of their owners, who have in these modern times, replaced the old "ancestral" pack. Our staff stress to prospective owners that dogs need daily socialization and want to be part of your family's daily activities, even something as mundane as sitting in front of the television or lying by the side of a youngster struggling with his math homework.

But there are still those who say they want their pet to spend the majority of its time outdoors. This begs the question we all must ask ourselves every time it comes up...THEN WHY HAVE A DOG AT ALL?

For those believing that a dog spending most of its life outdoors will be more protective of the home, you're wrong! Outside dogs, according to those with experience in the animal welfare field, may become so lonely and isolated that instead of barking at a stranger, they may approach the person for attention and a few pats on the head, since they are not receiving any from their family! So, in the end, the whole idea of your outside dog protecting you better is undermined by the animal's need for socialization with humans.

If circumstances should cause the outside dog owner to be forced to bring the animals in, then that animal may create a variety of problems, not being used to the "rules of behavior" that apply to the indoors. All housebreaking may have been lost, the animal may urinate on furniture to mark territory or may be so stressed by the change that it acts overly exuberant and knocks over things in an attempt to romp and play -- something it has been starved for since it has lead the "outside life". Ultimately, the situation will force the owner to kick the dog out once more.

People wonder why dogs chained or tied outdoors bark so much. The answer is pretty simple. They are bored and lonely. That's why outside dogs dig up the yard. What else do you expect them to do?

When owners turn in "outside dogs" to our animal shelter, adopting them is always difficult. Some are so stressed by being in an "indoor" situation, they may act aggressively, refuse to walk on cement floors, show fear of leashes or display other behaviors that cannot be overcome in a shelter atmosphere. The Humane Society prefers not to adopt out these unfortunate dogs to homes where they will again be subjected to a life of loneliness, boredom and lack of attention.

Sentencing a dog to a life outdoors without attention and companionship from humans, is nothing short of cruel. If you don't want to deal with training a dog, caring for its coat, dealing with fleas, shedding hair or getting home in time to feed it and let it out to relieve itself, then perhaps a dog is not for you!

If you obtain a dog, or a cat for that matter, with the intention of making it live outside, you have committed a major error. You have already decided that there will be no great closeness between you and that animal, no matter how many times you say you'll go outside to visit with it. Many adopters start out with the best intentions, but send a dog to live the outside life because they lack the time or desire to work with it to teach it how to live indoors as a well-behaved member of your family.

Cruelty doesn't just come in the form of outright abuse and neglect...it can be as simple as ignoring an animal that craves only your love and attention.

If you need information about how to train your dog, call the Humane Society! We're here to help. There is almost always an answer to just about any dog behavior problem, if you are willing to put in a little effort.

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