

City of Newport News Animal Services

Frequently asked questions about tethering

What is "tethering"?

This term refers to the practice of fastening a dog to a stationary object or stake, usually in the owner's backyard, as a means of keeping the animal under control. This term does not refer to periods when an animal is walked on a leash.

What's wrong with chaining my dog?

According to research, tethering of dogs is detrimental to their health and social development. The practice causes stress in a dog, as well as causes animals to become more aggressive and less social over time. In addition, tethering can be inhumane and pose a threat to the safety of the confined dog, other animals and humans.

Can I keep my dog tethered for longer than 1 hour if I am outside with him/her?

Yes—there is no limit for attended tethering—which means you must be outside in the immediate vicinity of, and in sight of, your dog.

What is "unattended tethering"?

Leaving your dog outside while you are not outside in the vicinity of, and in direct sight of, your dog (for example, the dog is outside and you are inside or not at home, etc.)

When does the tethering law begin and what does it say?

Beginning July 1, 2015, the Newport News Code states:

Section 6-78. Unattended tethering of dogs prohibited; exceptions.

(a) It shall be unlawful to tether any unattended dog for a period exceeding one (1) continuous hour.

(b) When a dog is tethered, the tether must be attached to the dog by a properly applied collar, halter, or harness configured so as to protect the dog from injury and prevent the dog or the tether from becoming entangled with other objects or dogs, or from extending over and object or edge that could result in the strangulation or injury of the dog. Furthermore, the tether must be at least three (3) times the length of the dog, as measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail.

(c) Any owner, whose dog has a valid license pursuant to Section 6-33 as of February 1, 2015, shall be exempt from the provisions of this section as it relates to each dog owned and licensed prior to February 1, 2015. The exemption provided by

this subsection shall be forever forfeit for any dog whose license is not renewed by February 1 of any subsequent year.

How long do people who currently tether have to make changes?

Initially, Animal Services will issue written warnings for violations of the Ordinance and will allow some time for citizens to implement alternatives to tethering. This is intended to give citizens ample time to become informed and make changes to comply with the law. Failure to comply with the animal control officer's warning timeframe could result in the issuance of a criminal summons and require a pet owner to appear in court.

How can tethering dogs be inhumane?

Dogs are naturally social beings and thrive on interaction with human beings and other animals. An otherwise friendly and docile dog, when kept continuously chained, becomes unhappy, anxious and often aggressive.

In many cases, the necks of chained dogs become raw and covered with sores from improperly fitted collars and the dogs' constant yanking and straining to escape confinement. Dogs have even been found with collars embedded in their necks, the result of years of neglect at the end of a chain.

How does tethering or chaining dogs pose a danger to humans?

Dogs tethered for long periods can become highly aggressive. Dogs are naturally protective of their territory; when confronted with a perceived threat, they respond according to their fight-or-flight instinct. A chained dog, unable to take flight, often feels forced to fight, attacking any unfamiliar animal or person who unwittingly wanders into his or her territory.

Numerous attacks on people by tethered dogs have been documented. Tragically, the victims of such attacks are often children who are unaware of the chained dog's presence until it is too late. A tethered dog that does get loose from his chains may remain aggressive, and may chase and attack unsuspecting passersby and pets.

What are my alternatives to tethering?

Make your dog a member of the family and bring it into your home. Take your dog for walks. Crate your pet inside your home, when you have to be away.

Consider a doggy daycare at a local vet or kennel. Costs range from \$15-\$25, on average, in the City of Newport News.

Consider building or purchasing an outside kennel or run.

Build a fence around your yard—or even just a part of your yard where your dog can run free. This allows your dog to be outside, with ample space for exercise. There are numerous dog fencing methods, many of which are inexpensive. Supplies for outdoor enclosures can be purchased at most hardware stores and many indoor confinement methods can be obtained at pet stores.

What resources are available for those wanting to switch from tethering to another means of confinement?

There are several other means of confinement available to those wanting to switch from tethering. Citizens may switch to a pen/kennel enclosure; construct a fence; or choose to house their dog(s) indoors. Supplies for outdoor enclosures can be purchased at most hardware stores and many indoor confinement methods can be obtained at pet stores. Animal Services has links on its website www.nnva.gov/756/animalservices on how to build a fence or an enclosure. The following is an few additional helpful link <http://www.hooverfence.com/manual/chainlink/install1.htm>

Information about local dog training opportunity can be found by consulting with a veterinarian, checking yellow page listing, or conducting an online search. The organization dogs deserve better offers a program to assist with fence building details can be found on their website at www.dogsdeservebetter.org