

The Backyard Dog

You see one in every community, a dog tied day after day to a back porch or fence, lying alone on a pad of bare, packed dirt. The water bowl, if there is one, is usually empty or just out of reach. Abandoned, but chained up, backyard dogs cannot move to comfort, shelter or companionship. In winter, they shiver, in summer, they languish... year-round they suffer.

Of course, dogs can be forced to live outside, alone and away from their human pack, but to force this kind of life on a dog is one of the worst things you can do. Being alone goes against the dog's most basic instinct. If you doubt this, think of all the whining, barking and clawing dogs you have seen tied alone outside. These dogs are trying desperately to get the attention of their human families.

People who keep their dogs constantly tied outside rationalize it, saying that they do spend time with them. But even the best meaning among them do not spend significant time with their animal companions. Under the best of circumstances, the backyard dog gets a bowl of food and water, a quick pat on the head and maybe a few minutes of contact with another living being each day.

Dogs can offer people the gifts of steadfast devotion, abiding love and joyful companionship. Unless people accept these offerings and take the time to return them in kind, it would be best not to get a dog. A sad, lonely, bewildered dog tied out back only suffers, and what sort of person wants to maintain suffering?

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