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VVMA Policy Statement

Position on Dog Tethering

Dog tethering is generally defined as the tying of a dog by rope or chain to a stationary object. When used continuously and for extended periods of time, tethering is an undesirable method of companion animal husbandry. Vermont statutes prohibit tethering "in a manner that is inhumane or detrimental to [the animal's] welfare." [Title 13, Section 8, 352:3]. **The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) believes that most instances of continuous, long-term tethering are, in fact, inhumane and detrimental to the welfare of the tethered animal and thus constitute cruelty.**

The VVMA believes that dogs are inherently social animals that are genetically programmed to live in close contact with others. Tethering is "solitary confinement," and has predictable negative impacts on both the tethered dog and on other animals or people who may stray into the dog's territory. Continuously tethered dogs are improperly socialized, and their instinct to defend their territory is exaggerated by their inability to avoid a fearful situation by running away. This fosters territorial aggressive behavior.

In addition, chained dogs are at risk from other animals and from humans. They are "sitting ducks," and may be trapped in potentially terrifying or harmful situations. There is no physical barrier to prevent either unsuspecting young victims or potential aggressors from approaching the tethered dog. Tethers can also become tangled around or hooked on the dog's shelter structure, or around his limbs or neck, causing injury or strangulation.

Other issues associated with tethering include the greater likelihood of accompanying neglect, cruelty and abuse, and the greater likelihood of nuisance barking leading to neighborhood complaints.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has stated in a 2003 forum on dog bite prevention: "Never chain or tether your dog because this can contribute to aggressive behavior."

In 1996 the USDA issued a statement in the Federal Register against tethering, stating: "Our experience in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act has led us to conclude that continuous confinement of dogs by a tether is inhumane."

Adopted by the VVMA Executive Committee 9/10/09