

Imagine, if you will something that kills as many children as firearms. That same something kills more children than falls from trees, playground equipment and fireworks accidents put together. This something is dog attacks. According to a statistic for Dogs Deserve better, between October of 2003 and February of 2015, there have been 398 children killed and/or seriously injured in dog attacks across the country. Another study was done by Karen Delise on fatal dog attacks from 1965-2001, 25% were inflicted by chained dogs of all different breeds. Another 17% involved dogs free roaming off their owners property, some of these dogs had broken their chains. We believe there are many, many more attacks that go unreported.

Good afternoon, I'm Abigail Avery, Manager and Humane Officer at the Adams County SPCA here in Gettysburg.

The life of a chained dog is a life of deprivation and loneliness. We've all seen them, the dogs that live their lives on the end of a chain. In the winter they huddle in the corner of a dilapidated dog house with no straw or blankets for warmth. In the summer they lie panting or scratching at the fleas that run over them. Through every thunder storm, every holiday all day everyday.

Dogs by nature are pack animals. They are wired to eat, sleep, hunt and play within their pack. Dogs are also territorial, like us, they are "fight or flight" animals. Virtually every chained dog goes "mad" to some degree in this confinement. A chained dog will grow more protective of his or her tiny plot of land, where they are left to eat, sleep, urinate and defecate. They are prevented from fleeing when they feel their territory has been invaded, leaving them with their only other option "fight". A dog kept chained alone in one spot for hours, days, months, or even years suffers immense psychological damage. An otherwise friendly and docile dog, when kept continuously chained, becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious, and often aggressive. Chained dogs are also subject to attacks by other animals and cruel humans. It is cruel to keep these highly social animal isolated.

We as humans have lots of thing to occupy our time, work, school, church, television, friends, family and shopping. These dogs don't have anything, they depend on their humans for food, water, exercise, grooming, medical care, companionship and love. Rarely does a chained or tethered dog receive sufficient care. Tethered dogs suffer from sporadic feedings, overturned water bowls, inadequate veterinary care, and extreme temperatures. During snow storms, these dogs often have no access to shelter. During periods of extreme heat, they may not receive adequate water or protection from the sun. What's more, because their often neurotic behavior makes them difficult to approach, chained dogs are rarely given even minimal affection. Tethered dogs may become "part of the scenery" and can be easily ignored by their owners.

As you are probably aware, current animal cruelty laws in Pennsylvania allow a dog to

be chained to a stationary object for its entire life as long as minimal food, water and so-called shelter are provided. The standards are extremely low. Legal action cannot be taken until a dog is already suffering from dehydration, malnutrition, hypo or hypothermia.

We receive a large number of calls from concerned citizens regarding dogs that are left outside 24-7. During the polar vortex of 2014 we received 20 to 30 calls a day from concerned citizens.

I just wanted to share with you some of the messages sent to us:

“PLEASE HELP THIS DOG!”

“You're the only one who can help her. We are having record low temperatures this week. Please take her! You must help her!”

“I am concerned about a dog that lives in my neighborhood. I walk my dog by the house everyday and everyday no matter what the temperature, this poor dog is tied up out front of this house.”

“At 6:30 am this morning the temperature was 0 degrees as indicated by the picture. I shined a spotlight on the Molly's prison”

“Is there anything that can be done about this? “

“There is a dog that stays out all year long in any kind of weather. This dog has been out in this very cold.”

This just shows you that there are people out there who care, but nothing can be done to improve the lives of these dogs with the laws as they stand today.

Many people believe that dogs should live outside ... because that's the way it's always been. Just because your Grandparents did it, doesn't mean we should.

Chained dogs may unintentionally hang themselves if they are tethered too close to a fence and attempt to jump it, or chained to a porch. We had one instance where two dogs were chained up outside, the chain of the smaller dog slid down the tree & the smaller dog & the larger dog's chain became entangled together. The smaller dog was hanging in the air choking to death ... had it not been reported right away & it was close to the shelter, the dog would have died that day.

There are several organizations that will help the owners of chained/penned dogs get

them inside. DOGS DESERVE BETTER is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to freeing the chained dog, and bringing our best friend into the home and family. Their mission is to free them through education, rescue and rehabilitation, grassroots legislation, and fencing programs. They will provide & install fencing at not cost to the owner.

Gandhi once said that a society can be judged by the way it treats it's animals. Dogs should not have to live chained or penned as prisoners, craving acknowledgment, respect, and love. A chained dog feels rejected and doesn't understand why. These helpless dogs suffer the frustration of watching the world go by in isolation—a cruel fate for what is by nature a highly social animal. Chained dogs deserve better from us as a society, and like our children they are innocent and cannot speak for themselves.

It is up to caring people like us to improve the lives of chained dogs and become a more humane community!!! These dogs deserve more than a life in prison, with no hope of parole.