

Keeping Your Dog Safe and Sound

By Sherry Woodard

Why shouldn't I let my dog run free?

Many dogs are allowed to roam the streets. The dog's family might say, "Oh, he's okay – he comes home eventually; he has friends out there." But, it's often a dangerous world out there. If you allow your dog to roam, you are abdicating responsibility for his safety. Here are some ways your dog could be harmed:

- He might be hit by traffic, causing injury or death.
- She might be picked up by animal control officers, just doing their jobs.
- He might be poisoned or suffer injury at the hands of people who feel that the dog is a nuisance.
- She might be poisoned by drinking antifreeze from a puddle, or ingesting snail bait or other toxins.
- He might fight with or be attacked by other dogs, resulting in injury.



What do I do about an escape artist?

If you have a dog who is an escape artist, start with securing your yard so he can't escape. But, don't stop there. Your dog may be escaping because he is bored. Try the following:

- Let him spend more time in the house, interacting with his pack (your family).
- Make sure she gets some active play time with some dog friends.
- Get him some fun things to chew on (like Kongs and hollow bones with treats stuffed inside).
- Get her a dirt box to dig in or a kiddie pool to splash in.
- Take him on more walks so he can smell and explore outside the confines of his yard.

Make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise. A tired dog is much less likely to try and escape from his yard. He would much rather relax in front of the TV with his family!

What else can I do to keep my dog safe and sound?

Some other responsibilities of taking care of a dog are:

- Make sure your dog always has a current I.D. tag on his collar, so that you can be called if he is found wandering alone. He should also have a microchip ID.

- Spay/neuter your pet – it's your responsibility to prevent unwanted animals from being born, and spaying or neutering helps animals lead happier, healthier lives.
- Take care of your dog's health by bringing her to the vet for annual checkups. Be aware that your dog may require more medical checkups and medication as she ages.
- Train your dog – teach him simple commands and proper manners so he will be well-behaved and welcome in any home or setting.

When you take an animal as a pet, it is your responsibility to stay committed to your loyal companion for a lifetime – through thick and thin, through whatever changes occur in your life. If you absolutely must find a new home for your pet, it is also your responsibility to find a home that is as good as or better than your own.

Sherry Woodard is the dog training and care consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

See also: What Dogs Need to Be Happy