

OUTSIDE DOGS By Dennis Fetko, PhD
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Unless you're medically intolerant of the dog (and therefore can't take care of him in a medical emergency, so you shouldn't have the dog anyway), making a dog stay outside is a costly waste.

If he's for protection, what do you think I want to steal - your lawn?

When you leave, do you put your valuables and your kids out in your yard? Just what is the dog protecting out there? Most dogs kept outside cause far more nuisance complaints from barking and escaping than any deterrent to intrusion. Such complaints cause teasing, antagonism, release and poisoning. With your dog a helpless victim, it's no laughing matter.

If I'm a crook and your dog is out, your fence protects ME, not your possessions or your dog. If I just open the gate, 9 out of 10 dogs will run off! I can safely shoot, stab, spear, poison, snare, strangle them, or dart through the fence and you just lost your dog AND everything I steal!

If he's tied up and I keep out of reach, he's useless. He'll bark, but outside dogs bark so much, they're usually ignored. But let a dog hit the other side of a door or window I'm breaking into, and I'm GONE! I can't hurt the dog until he can hurt me, and nothing you own is worth my arm. Deterrence is effective protection.

Protection and aggression are not the same. Protection is defensive, reactive, often passive, and threatens or injures no one. Aggression is active, harmful and offensive, threatens all and benefits none. Yard dogs often develop far more aggression than protectivity because everyone who passes by or enters has already violated the territory that dog has marked dozens of times a day for years. That's not protection, it's not desirable and it overlooks two facts of life today:

First, property owners have implied social contracts with others in the community. Letter carriers, paper boys, delivery people, law enforcement, emergency medical personnel, meter readers and others are allowed near and at times on your property without your specific permission. And sure that ten-year-old was not supposed to jump your fence after his Frisbee; but neither you nor your dog are allowed to cause him injury if he does. Imagine this: A neighbor looks into your yard or window and sees you, your wife or child laying on the floor in a pool of blood. They call 9-1-1 and your dog prevents paramedics from assisting! Should they shoot your dog or just let you die?

Great choice!!

Second, even if the intruder is a criminal, few places allow you or your dog to cause physical injury to prevent property loss. Convicted felons have sued the dog's owner from jail and won more in the suit than they ever could have stolen! Appalling? - True.

And don't be foolish enough to believe your homeowner's insurance will cover the loss. Now you see why many feel that an outside dog is a no-brainer.

The more a dog is outdoors, the less behavioral control you have. It's easier to solve four or five indoor problems than one outdoor problem. The reason is valid and simple: The more you control the stimuli that reaches your dog, the more you control the responses. You've got a lot more control over your living room than you do over your entire county! When your dog is bored, but teased by every dog, cat, bird, squirrel, motorcycle, paperboy, airplane, firecracker and backfiring truck in the county, OF COURSE he'll dig, chew, and bark.

Would you sit still all day everyday? Do you want unnecessary medical and parasite fees, especially as the dog ages?

When a dog is alone indoors, you are still 30% there because your scent and things he associates with you, constantly remind the dog of you and your training. When he's out, your dog is alone whether you're home or not. Do you really expect him to keep YOU in mind while the entire world teases, distracts and stimulates him?

The media is full of stories about the family dog saving everyone's life during a fire. How many people, including children, would be dead today if those dogs were kept outside? SURE - you ALWAYS get up to investigate every time your yard dog barks. And I've got this bridge.

An outdoor dog has an address, not a home. Dogs offer real value as companion animals. Stop behavior problems and start enjoying real protection and companionship. Bring your dogs inside.

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