



Keeping your dog at home

Roaming Dogs

We ask a lot of our canines these days. We confine them to our small back yards and little do we think of their yearning for the freedom of the open spaces. It is not surprising that the wanderlust sometimes strikes and a dog flees. But if your dog is allowed freedom to roam problems are sure to arise.

Dogs which are allowed to roam the street have a short lifespan. They often roam so far that they become lost or stolen. Unfortunately, the owners of a roaming dog may never see their beloved pet again.

There are a number of ways to prevent your dog from roaming. The easiest and most obvious solution is to construct a fence that is secure enough to keep your dog on your own property and out of your neighbour's.

Impounded Dogs

Council by-laws allow for infringement fines for dogs found wandering. Dogs may either be returned to the owner by the Council Officer or impounded. If the dog is returned to the owner, a fine of \$80 is issued. Owners of unregistered dogs which are returned by Council officers are issued an additional \$50 fine for this offence. To obtain the release of a dog from the Pound, the owner needs to pay the release fee of either \$80 for a registered dog or \$200 for an unregistered dog plus the registration fee. If the dog has been impounded outside of Council's normal business hours an additional \$60 fee applies.

Fencing inspection

Council has placed a condition on all registrations that fencing be adequate to contain the dog on the premises at all times. Where it is found that a dog has escaped from the property, an appointment will be made for Council to inspect the fencing. If the fence is found to be inadequate the owner will be given 28 days to make the required changes.

Sensible Fencing

The style of fence is very important. Many dogs are excellent jumpers and climbers—even a three metre high fence can be ineffective.

In such cases, the cheapest and most effective means of preventing escape is to construct a 'lean-to' section, inclined inwards, on the top of the fence in a similar fashion to the security fences that surround factories. The lean-to prevents dogs from climbing over the fence and also presents a visual barrier to dogs that can jump over high fences.

Lean-to fencing is far easier and cheaper to construct than placing another vertical section on top of the existing fence—which is still likely to be scaled by some dogs.

Remember that some medium sized dogs are able to clear a two metre fence without difficulty. Also, the base of any vertical extension can be used by the dog to lever itself over a fence. An extension upwards and inclining inwards will prevent this and present a very effective visible barrier to most dogs.

Any gaps in the fencing on your property should be repaired with good quality permanent material to prevent your pooch escaping and fighting neighbouring dogs, or children putting their hands through a fence to pat the dog and possibly being bitten.

Holes underneath the fence also cause problems and need addressing. A concrete ledge laid under the fence will prevent a dog from digging out, and running a wire a few centimetres above this will reduce the size

of the gap between the ground and the fence. Chicken netting can be attached to the fence, securely pegged to the ground, laid along the top of the ground at right angles and pegged at the edges.

Gates are best fitted with self closing mechanisms and should be kept closed unless specifically in use. The gate should not be lower than the fence.

There is also a fence containment system on the market, which is portable, flexible, reliable and safe. This system keeps your dog contained safely on your property without fences by using microchip technology. A wire is placed around the property to form a boundary for the dog.

This wire can be buried or attached to the existing fence, a radio signal is transmitted through the wire. The dog wears a collar with a little unit attached to it. As the dog approaches the boundary the collar unit picks up the radio signal. The collar unit sends out a high pitched beep, this warns the dog that it is going where it should not go. If the dog ignores the warning, it receives a pulsed correction, backs off and stays at home. The dog only receives the correction if it ignores the warning beep. The correction is about 1/4 of one millionth of 1 amp. Further information about this system can be obtained by calling 1300 720 910

In Rented Accommodation

People in rented accommodation have an added problem. Understandably, they are reluctant to pay for construction of a fence on a property they do not own. However, they do have a responsibility to ensure their dog is contained on the property to prevent their dog being injured on the street, the possibility of the dog attacking or menacing people, or menacing people, or becoming a nuisance to neighbours or becoming a nuisance to neighbours.

Owners in rented accommodation who are not able to alter or construct perimeter fencing, will need to contain their dog in a pen or fence a section of the premises. Suitable fencing should be constructed so it can be easily moved when the lease has expired.

Dogs in Darwin should have access to water at all times, and always have available shelter from sun and rain.

Desexing

Desexing can be effective with male dogs roaming but generally only if the reason for the roaming is the intention of looking for sexually active females. A male dog may escape, find a female dog in season and then repeatedly escape till he finds she is no longer attractive. By this time he has discovered that being free to roam has lots of other enticements and therefore will continue his wandering ways even after desexing.

Fencing Advice

Council's Petcare Helpline Ph: 8930 0606.

