



# Backyard Blues

## Solitary Confinement is How We *Punish* Social Animals

Dogs were domesticated by humans to perform a variety of functions, the most common of which is now companionship. Dogs are pack animals who form extremely strong social bonds and whose most important psychological need is to be around the people they are bonded to. Making a dog live in the backyard is unnatural – they **need** to live with you.

People sometimes mistakenly believe that a dog, like livestock, will be happier with fresh air, grass and more room to “run around.” But when did you last see a happy, relaxed backyard dog “running around” his yard? Such dogs are inevitably sad, bored and lonely, wanting only to be able to spend time with their families in the house. When they manage to get human contact, they are desperately over-excited from deprivation and are likely to misbehave. Ironically, most dogs that are banished to the yard never develop house manners or social skills and so, if they *are* tried in the house, do poorly and re-condemn themselves to solitude. The humans also miss out on the benefits of dog companionship.

Backyard dogs suffer from greatly increased incidence of aggression, digging, barking and howling problems and are at elevated risk of being relinquished to animal shelters. They are too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter, sometimes lack adequate shelter and fresh water, and are often dirty and ungroomed.

## What You Can Do – Get Dogs Into The Family!

- Please don't get a dog, large or small, unless you are prepared to let him live with you in the house. This means investing time in housetraining, chewtraining, daily walks, and teaching good manners. It also means buying appropriate toys.
- If you would like to leave your dog in the yard for part of the day when you're gone, make sure the fence is visually opaque so that he is not teased by the sight of passersby or tormented by kids. Leave him chew toys, proper shelter and fresh water. Bring him in when you're home and provide daily walks. Being outside in the yard does not count as “exercise.” Make sure he wears an identification tag.
- Help us educate about the plight of backyard dogs. *It is psychological cruelty.*

