

Tethering of Companion Animals

Position:

The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) does not support the inhumane tethering of companion animals.

Definitions:

Tethering: The practice of fastening an animal to a stationary object, such as a stake, doghouse, pole, or part of a building using a leash, cable, chain, or other attachment.

Inhumane Tethering: Tethering is considered inhumane when it compromises an animal's physical or mental well-being or is for an extended period of time and the animal is left unsupervised.

Summary

- Tethering poses both physical and behavioural welfare risks to animals.
- Tethering may prevent undesired behaviour(s) but does not guarantee safety or address the underlying cause of such behaviour(s).

Rationale

- Tethering is often used to:
 - confine animals:
 - permit individual housing for animals who are kept as a large group:
 - allow animals to spend time outside when there is not suitable fencing or when the animal may escape if unrestricted; or
 - separate animals from the home because of space constraints, or due to behaviours such as excitability or not being housetrained.
- A tether significantly restricts an animal's movement, prevents expression of natural behaviours, limits their interactions with animals and people, and limits animals from exercising.
- Tethering can lead to and exacerbate behaviour concerns such as aggression and reactivity in animals. Studies show that tethered animals are at a higher risk for showing aggression to other animals and people.
- Tethering, chaining or otherwise leaving an animal for an extended period of time without supervision deprives them of companionship, care, exercise, and attention.
- Trolley, cable, or pulley runs where animals are attached to an overhead line and able to move along the track are sometimes used as an alternative to stationary tethering. While this may be less restrictive than stationary tethering, other risks still exist such as: tangling, injury, inability to escape the elements or other animals, and a lack of socialization and exercise.
- Although some animals may be tethered near other animals this does not meet their need for socialization with those animals, as tethers restrict movement and play.

- Harms and risks of tethering include:
 - the tether becoming entangled or hooked on the animal's shelter structure or other objects, potentially causing injury or strangulation;
 - injuries due to collars or equipment used, such as irritated skin caused by rubbing and embedded collars;
 - pull injuries such as tracheal tears and cervical neck injuries;
 - increasing aggression and reactivity;
 - inability to escape exposure to the elements or to escape predation and threats;
 - losing access to food and/or water if those resources are made inaccessible to the animal;
 - being forced to defecate and rest in the same area; and
 - boredom and frustration.
- EHS recommends alternatives to tethering such as:
 - providing fencing that is secure at both the top and underground;
 - providing secure enclosures such as dog runs or catios;
 - spaying and neutering to reduce roaming, marking, or other hormonal behaviours; or
 - providing the animal with adequate exercise, training, enrichment, and social interaction to reduce undesirable behaviours.
- If animals must be tethered the following conditions should be met:
 - the equipment used must be humane and safe;
 - pinch, prong, and choke collars must not be used;
 - the environment they are tethered in must be clean and safe from risks such as predators and obstructions;
 - they must not be tethered for an excessive amount of time, such as overnight;
 - they must have access to adequate protection from the elements;
 - there must be distinct areas for drinking and eating away from areas for defecating and urinating;
 - they must have access to food and water; and
 - they are appropriately supervised to ensure their mental and physical well-being are not compromised.
- Bylaws and animal welfare legislation should consider the impact of tethering on welfare and address inhumane tethering.

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