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Fence for the right reason - don't neglect your loyal companion

Dear Gus,

My family just moved into a new home. We are looking into some sort of containment for the dogs. What would you recommend? Regular fencing or the invisible type offence? Thank you!

Allen W.,
Orange, CT.

Allen thanks for the question. Fencing can be a blessing or a true form of animal cruelty. The main differences between a physical barrier and invisible barrier are cost, aesthetics, training time, and the ability to not only keep your dog in, but other things out. Let me explain briefly what I mean when I say fencing can be a blessing or cruelty. As long as there is someone outside with the dogs, mainly for supervision, a fence is a great thing. The dogs can run, play, relax and just get some good old fresh air. Now, the cruelty part- Dogs are not lawn ornaments and do not belong outside without supervision! If your intent is to leave the dog outside for long periods of time, why own a dog?

Leaving a dog confined outside as a way to have a dog without worrying about whether he or she will eliminate in the house, chew the furniture, or get into the trash indicates that you have neglected your obligation to teach your dog good behavior or that it is feeling stress. Dogs need supervision and companionship. If your pet is not properly supervised, he or she can really become a nuisance.

What I often see with my clients when a dog has been left outside for long periods of time without supervision is sequence of problems, usually in a specific, escalating order that starts with digging holes (ripping out shrubs etc.), moves to nuisance barking, and ends with fence running. Worst of all is that dogs that progress to fence running may also progress to biting. These problems grow as your dog becomes more and more bored and stressed. Remember, dogs are pack animals and what they need is their human companion. Many people think that if they can't be with their dog, a second or even third dog will keep him company outdoors. But the problem there is that if more than one dog is outside, again unsupervised, you'll be dealing with gang mentality!

Probably the biggest downside of the invisible type fence is that it will not keep other animals (or people) out of your yard and away from your dog. The classic case is that you let your dog outside to eliminate prior to bedtime, and your dog just happens to run into a skunk. Now you are "deskunking" your dog at 11 p.m. on a cold winter night. I recommend that with invisible fencing you do not have it installed right up to the street or your property line, since most dogs will run up to investigate when a child is riding by on a bicycle or someone walks by the property. You don't want to be responsible for an incident where the passerby becomes frightened and possibly trips and falls or even has a heart attack due to your dog's natural curiosity. On the plus side, they tend to be more economical than a physical barrier and, as the name says, they are invisible.

So, get whatever fence best suits your neighborhood and pocketbook. But don't let it be a substitute for supervision, obedience training, and companionship.

Keep dogs supervised, and enjoy many happy healthy loving years with your pets.
I hope this helps.

Gus.

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