

Animal Advocates Society

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Dear Mayor Corrigan and Councilors,

I am here to speak in support of the principle behind the proposed amendment to your animal control bylaw, but also to point out some deficiencies that can lead to an increase in different forms of cruelty.

WHAT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT ADDRESSES

The proposed bylaw would limit the time to one hour a day that a dog can be tethered “unattended”.

WHAT IT MISSES

An hour of noise and aggressive behaviour by an “unattended” dog is still going to be a public nuisance, especially if “unattended” means that no one needs even be on the property. And tethering is still permitted 24 hours a day as long as it is “attended” in some way. This proposal still allows car-lot dogs to be chained all day as there will always be salesmen in “attendance”.

Can staff be asked for a definition of “unattended” before this is voted on?
But most importantly, this report misses the much larger issue of “yard dogs” in general.

TETHERING IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

A yard dog is a dog that is consistently kept outside the primary building. Many yard dogs live their whole lives, night and day, summer and winter, loose in a residential or a business yard, in a dirty pen, on a chain, in a garage, caged behind a building, boarded up under a porch or a deck, on a balcony, and some are even kept in sheds.

Regardless of the definition of “unattended” this report does not take into consideration that if some dogs’ owners can no longer tether their dogs, more dogs will almost certainly be kept in these other ways. Many dogs in Burnaby already endure this misery, and many citizens are just as anguished and angry about those dogs as they are about tethered dogs. They just don’t know to report these dogs to you, so you may not be aware of the extent of the problem. 30 SPCA reports of tethering do not include all the dogs that are not tethered, but are penned and caged and in garages.

HISTORY



As some of you may be aware, Animal Advocates began bringing the plight of yard dogs before councils in 1995 as a result of which Burnaby added our “Humane Treatment of Dogs” sections to its existing animal control bylaws. The added sections required that feces be cleaned up daily, that there be clean, potable water, sufficient food for good health, and shelter of a sufficient size which protects from heat, cold, rain, and wind. Most important of all was the section that required owners to exercise their dog once a day – away from the place of confinement.

Unhappily for dogs, until very recently, these provisions were never used to help them.

This dog endured ten years on a chain. She had no blanket, toy, or bone, often, no clean food or water. Animal Advocates first saw her at night, lying in the frozen mud, being snowed and sleeted on, surrounded by her own excrement. The humane bylaw sections were not used to help her.





Her owner surrendered her to AAS in January 1997. We rehabilitated her and found her a home with a loving family and she had the most wonderful life for 18 months.





But the owner quickly replaced her with this Rottweiler who, we are told, was still seen in his pen recently. The proposed amendment would not have prevented her from living her whole life in a pen and will not prevent this Rottweiler from living his whole life in a pen. For the sake of dogs like these two, the bylaw must prevent all forms of consistently keeping dogs outside.

These are just a few of the many dogs that have been documented in Burnaby. Every dog was reported to the SPCA, some were reported for years.



The two Rottweilers were used for backyard breeding, a growing business that every municipality must deal with. If these dogs were not allowed to be tethered, they probably would have been penned instead. Only a ban on yard dogs will prevent this.



This is where a car lot dog was imprisoned all day: at night he was loose in the car lot, but he was only a pup and was terrified being all alone. This anti-tethering law will not prevent dogs been penned or loose. This law will not help car-lot dogs.

This old dog was incontinent and his back legs were paralyzed. One winter he became frozen to the floor of his dog house by his own urine. Complaints by neighbours, even those in tears, resulted in no help for him, not even after the adoption of your humane bylaws. He was not tethered; he was loose in his yard so this proposed bylaw would not have helped him or reduced the neighbours' anguish.

A ban on yard dogs is the only thing that would have saved him from so many years of suffering.



When this Dalmatian was put into pen it was a sweet, good-natured pup. He is now a very angry and dangerous dog. The proposed amendment will not help him. Nor will it help the Dalmatian that we were just told about that lived in a yard for many years, even when its skin was raw and bleeding. This bylaw will not prevent that. Only a ban on yard dogs will prevent this.

We are told that this is the second German Shepherd used as a guard dog at this business. Not just recent research, but many decades of research proves what has been known for thousands of years, that this is how to make a dog a high-risk danger. That dog was still there a few weeks ago. A ban on yard dogs will end the dangerous practice of using dogs as guards.



Some dogs, like this one in Burnaby, live their whole lives in garages. Some are chained or kept in a cage in the garage to stop them from damaging the goods they are protecting. This bylaw will not prevent that. Only a ban on yard dogs that includes keeping dogs in pens, sheds, garages, porches, etc, will end the cruelty of dogs in garages.



She lived in this pen for four years; she was never allowed in the house, she was never walked.
This bylaw permits this.

This Pit Bull is a concern to the neighbours for humane reasons and also because of the issue of safety. He is a yard dog, never socialized with humans or other dogs. Sometimes he is chained, but mostly he is loose and this bylaw will not prevent that. Criminals are increasingly arming themselves, not only with guns, but with dogs too, and this will only get worse as long as we do not ban it.



Upset neighbours were forced to witness this dog's suffering all day as he stood shaking, soaked to the skin by winter's rain, and to listen to him cry at night. He was the second dog treated this way at this Burnaby address.



His chain didn't reach to his dog house. Even though this was his water and he was sick and injured, his cries for help were ignored by all except the neighbours – even after the adoption of your humane bylaws.

If he had not been allowed to be tethered, he probably would have been kept in the ramshackle shed he was chained to. Only a ban on yard dogs could have helped this dog.



Two Rottweilers live in this small pen full of feces, and were reported to us as recently as two weeks ago. This bylaw will not prevent this cruelty and potential danger. Only a ban on yard dogs will stop the penning and caging of dogs.



A BETTER BYLAW

A bylaw that only restricts tethering can result in more dogs being kept in other inhumane ways. What is needed is a ban on keeping dogs outside the primary building: loose in yards, on chains or other means of tethering, in pens, in garages, in sheds or under decks etc. Most people who keep a dog this way will choose not to own a dog if they are not permitted to keep it outside. Education ought to accompany legislation, but is not a substitute for legislation. It took legislation to ban public smoking and to ensure seat belt-wearing. Education can take several generations to work, and suffering dogs must not be left to suffer and the public cannot be left at risk.

Animal Advocates Society is proposing a comprehensive solution to the multi-faceted problems caused by the existence of yard dogs in our communities.

THE PROBLEM IS SIX-FOLD

Animal Cruelty - it is cruel and inhumane to isolate social creatures. In our so-called civil society, dogs are allowed to be treated worse than livestock. Their suffering is profound

Public Safety - all data confirms that unsocialized dogs are a grave danger to the public, especially to children.

Public Nuisance - the dogs frequently bark, howl, cry, whine, escape, and menace, creating neighbourhood fear and anger. Noise complaints often result in further cruelty to the dog in the form of punishment and muzzling.

Public Expense – inspections, impoundment, and disposal costs money, and these costs continue to rise as more dogs are owned.

Public Health - the areas the dogs are kept in are frequently contaminated with feces and urine and the food is a rodent attractant.

Lawlessness - when neighbours cannot get any action from city hall or the SPCA, some dogs are poisoned, but many kind people feel forced to break the law by removing and rehoming the dog. A broad spectrum of people have been forced to do this, from off-duty police officers, off-duty pound employees, crown prosecutors, grandmothers, single mothers on welfare, wealthy socialites, ministers, social workers, and untold numbers of ordinary people who would not otherwise dream of committing a felony. They are forced to become lawless by the lack of action by legislators and the SPCA.

THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE AND EASILY ENFORCED

The solution is a ban on the keeping of dogs outside of the primary building except for one hour a day while attended (a responsible adult on the property); and not at all at night when barking and crying most disturbs neighbours. We suggest that 'day' be taken to mean from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. "Unattended" means when no responsible adult is on the property to respond to a noise or other complaint. Those who intend to keep a dog outside will be discouraged by this restriction and will tend not to get a dog.

Burnaby has the opportunity to set an example that not only will other BC municipalities follow, but because of the internet, will be copied by jurisdictions all over North America and in fact all over the world.

'No tethering' laws mean well. AAS can see that the Burnaby bylaw is well-meaning, but we hope this proposal goes back to staff for more input and improvement so that you help all yard dogs.

Attachments: (available on request)

Behavioural/psychological effects of isolation, chaining, and substandard living conditions
<http://www.animaladvocates.com/its-time/ItsTime-research-behav.htm>

Physical effects of isolation, chaining, and substandard living conditions
<http://www.animaladvocates.com/its-time/ItsTime-research-physical.htm>

Public safety issues of isolation, chaining and substandard living conditions
<http://www.animaladvocates.com/its-time/ItsTime-research-safety.htm>

Expert local opinion:

Dr. Stanley Coren:

Though best known to the public for his series of best-selling books on dogs, Stanley Coren is also a well respected scientist and Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia. He has earned the title of Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of his contributions to psychological research.

"The general consensus is that chaining out a dog for long periods makes it aggressive. There are even tracts which were found in the ruins of Pompeii suggesting that the way to make your guard dog vicious is to tether him on a short chain. If you believe anecdotal evidence (this from my own eleven years of teaching dog obedience classes), dogs which have been tied out are either vicious, fearful and hand-shy or both."

Gary Gibson, founder, Custom Canine:

Developed standards for training and placement of therapy and institute dogs throughout the lower mainland. Developed a program to work with psychiatrists who help people dealing with their fear of dogs. In 1990 received Certification to adjudicate the Canine Good Citizen Test, an internationally recognized standard for companion and therapy dogs. Co-developed the Canine Super Citizen Test, which is being used as a standard for social and assistant dogs in BC.

"Society is starting to realize that dogs have psychological needs. When you start messing with a dog's mind and not giving it the things it needs on a day-to-day basis, you are abusing that dog. And those needs are much greater than food, water, and shelter. In particular dogs need to feel part of a pack, even if that pack is human."

To view more photos of yard dogs in Burnaby, go to <http://www.animaladvocates.com/yard-dogs/photos.htm>