



Managing and Preventing Dog Escapes

Escaping is a serious problem for both pet guardians and their dogs, as it can have tragic consequences. If your dog is running loose, they are in danger of being hurt in a number of ways. Additionally, the guardian is liable for any damage or injury their dog may cause, and a fine may be required if the dog is picked up by an animal control agency. In order to resolve an escaping problem, it's important to first determine not only how your dog is escaping, but also why they're escaping.

Your dog may be escaping because they are bored or lonely, they're left outside for long periods of time, or because they lack adequate exercise, social interaction, or mental stimulation.

The following recommendations may help keep your dog home:

- Keep your dog inside when supervision is unavailable. If your dog is destructive when left alone in the house, consider using a crate to confine them. The best way to prevent an escape is to leave your dog inside the house and to supervise them when they're outside. Be sure to take time to introduce them to their crate or confinement space so that they have a positive association to it, before you have to leave them.
- If they prefer the outdoors, you may need to set up a safe confinement space in your yard that provides adequate shade and shelter while you're away. During inclement weather, you may need a backup option to their outdoor pen to help keep them healthy.
- Make sure your dog is receiving plenty of exercise – mental *and* physical. Spend time walking your dog, playing fetch in the yard, or taking them to the dog park, while also making sure her other 'doggy' needs are being met. Dogs need opportunities to chew, sniff, explore and more!
- Teach your dog a few commands and tricks. Practice these every day for 5-10 minutes. Sign your dog up for an ARF training class for additional mental stimulation by calling (925) 296-3111.
- Provide interesting toys to keep your dog busy when alone. Rotate the toys to keep them interesting. There are many ways to make toys more engaging by filling them with food or treats. Some can even be frozen to last longer!
- If working very long days, take your dog to a doggie day care, or ask a friend or neighbor to walk them.

Fears and Phobias

Spot may be escaping in response to something she is afraid of such as loud noises, thunderstorms, firecrackers or construction sounds. If this is the case, identify what is frightening your dog and help desensitize them to it. Check with a veterinarian about giving your dog anti-anxiety medication for assistance with behavior modification if you think this might be the cause.

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If these fear evoking sounds are predictable, it's best to leave your dog indoors when they are likely to encounter the fear stimulus. Help to muffle noises by turning on a television, radio or loud fan. Also, be sure to provide a safe place for your dog to ride out these events. Observe where they like to go when they feel anxious, then allow access to that space, or create a similar space for them to use when the fear stimulus is present. Some dogs prefer to burrow and ride out the storm alone, others may seek comfort with people. If your dog does best with a person during these instances, it may be best to find someone to stay with them.

Common Escape Routes

While addressing the possible emotional cause for escape, it's also important to prevent future unwanted adventures. For most dogs, it's as simple as going under, over or through. So how do we prevent it?

- If you think your dog is going under the fence, try lining the fence with difficult landscaping like rocks, bricks or sturdy bushes. Utilize “chicken wire” fencing and bury it along the base of the fence with the sharp edges rolled inward, place large rocks at the base, or lay chain-link fencing on the ground. Or add anti-dig bars along which can be mounted to the baseline of the fence to help secure the fence line from underground.
- If you think they might be going over, there are a couple fence additions that you can add. You can add an extension to the fence which tilts in toward the yard. The extension does not necessarily need to make the fence much higher, as long as it tilts inward at about a 45-degree angle. Move tables and other objects that can act as a launching pad for your dog to jump over the fence. You could also utilize the lattice sold for the tops of privacy fencing to raise the height, or attach roll bars along the top. If you have a dog that uses the fence to pull themselves over, roll bars might be useful. Roll bars are essentially PVC pipes that hang along the edge of the fence line – while they don't prevent jumping, they do make it near impossible for your dog to gain any footing as they roll under the dogs paws and prevent traction.
- So what about through? Walk along your fence line from the outside *and* inside. Take your drill and screws with you and secure any boards that might be loose. If your dog has learned how to open a gate, modify the gate or latch to keep them contained. To prevent human error, you may want to add a spring to the gate to ensure that it closes behind each person that passes through.

Knowing how your dog escapes will help identify what needs to be modified to the yard. However, until the reason is known why your dog escapes and the motivation to escape is decreased, the problem cannot be successfully resolved. Finally, studies show that neutering will decrease roaming in about 90 percent of the cases.

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