

Advocate pushes for ban on tethering dogs; Group has gathered 500 signatures from residents who want to outlaw practice

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Alicia Schwartz wants Columbus to break the chains that bind dogs in backyards where some endure heartbreaking neglect.

Representing "Dogs Deserve Better" (www.dogsdeservebetter.org), a national group that lobbies for local laws against leaving dogs tethered outside for days, Schwartz said she and other advocates have collected almost 500 signatures from residents here who want to outlaw the practice. She made a pitch Tuesday to Columbus Council, which agreed to study it.

Schwartz said dogs chained outside often lack adequate water and shelter, and some suffer worse: They are left tied until their restraint bites into their necks, with the wound attracting flies and leading to infection. Some become so tangled that they can't move. Some strangle to death. Some starve.

With limited space in which to roam, chained dogs sometimes cannot defecate anywhere but where they lie. Unable to flee when they sense a threat, they become increasingly aggressive in defending what little territory they have and may attack anyone who wanders into range, Schwartz said.

So she suggested Columbus do what the Georgia counties of Gwinnett, DeKalb and Chatham have done: Ban tethering unattended dogs. Exceptions could be made for temporarily tethering a dog when the pet owner is close by, and for restraining a dog on a run such as a cable or "trolley system," with restrictions such as:

Only one dog may be hooked on the line at a time.

No dog may be left on the run between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The line must be at least 10 feet long, and at least 4 feet but no more than 7 feet off the ground.

The tether must be attached to a harness or a collar other than the collar bearing the dog's rabies tag, with enough slack in the collar to slip two fingers between it and the dog's neck. Choke or pinch collars would not be allowed.

No dog may be restrained on a run so that the animal could become tangled, jump a fence or other obstacle or fall from a deck or other raised surface and become injured or die.

Those were among the provisions in a proposed law Schwartz provided Tuesday.

Councilors decided to get more information on the issue and discuss it in more detail during a work session. City Manager Isaiah Hugley said he would seek input from the city's animal control advisory board, which makes recommendations about city animal control ordinances.

Advocates hope to banish chaining

The Daily News Leader (Stanton, Virginia)

July 8, 2007 Sunday

STAUNTON -- It was a dog-day afternoon for a handful of local animal activists looking to bring an end to the incessant chaining of canines.

With car horns honking in support and periodic visitors seeking information, volunteers for Chains Hurt and Spay Neuter Inc. chained themselves to doghouses Saturday on a hill next to Wright's Dairy-Rite on Greenville Avenue. Their goal was to bring awareness to the plight of dogs that are left tethered to a chain for days on end.

Sitting atop a plastic doghouse under a relentless morning sun, Nita Lewis, president of Spay Neuter Inc., stated the obvious. "It feels hot," she said with grin.

Lewis had no plans to retreat from her eight-hour stint of being chained, although she held out hope for a helping hand in the food department. "We're hoping somebody comes by. We didn't take time to pack a lunch," she said.

Dreama Brooks, also of Spay Neuter Inc. and wearing a spiked dog collar, was eagerly awaiting the tree shade to make its way over to her doghouse. Nearly three hours into her chaining experience, she said, "My collar is hot, there are flies and bugs biting. It's incredible. I just couldn't imagine a dog being on a chain 24-seven."

A Craigsville resident, Brooks said she's hoping to see changes within her own community. "Where I'm from there are too many chained dogs," she said.

Amy Hammer, co-founder of Chains Hurt, said the group received much support throughout the morning and that a number of people stopped by for brochures and additional information on the hazards of chaining dogs.

"It's been going pretty well," said Hammer, wearing a chain while lounging near her doghouse. "All positive, and some blank stares."

Lewis said the anti-chaining effort already made inroads with one of her neighbors in Waynesboro who had been keeping two Labrador retrievers chained for long periods of time.

"They're being brought by at the end of the day" and will be placed with a foster family, Lewis said.

The Facts

Chained dogs are 2.8 times more likely to attack humans than non-tethered dogs.

Chained dogs can suffer psychological damage.

From October 2003 through November 2006, 108 children in the United States were killed or seriously injured by chained dogs.

The Beaufort Gazette (South Carolina)

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July 27, 2007 Friday

Beaufort resident fights to unchain county's dogs

BYLINE: Sandra Walsh, The Beaufort Gazette, S.C.

Jul. 27--Beaufort resident Kim Bonturi treats her rescued dogs, Maggie and Brooke, just like she would her children.

The dogs receive regular walks and healthcare and are allowed to come and go as they please through a doggy door that connects the house to a fenced-in backyard.

In a perfect world, Bonturi would like to see all dogs treated the same way, but that's not what she's asking for.

What Bonturi is asking for is a little respect.

On Sept. 12, Bonturi will ask the Beaufort County Council's Community Services and Public Safety Committee to consider an ordinance that would prohibit chaining dogs.

Bonturi is in the process of drafting the ordinance, but it likely will mirror a state bill introduced last month that would prohibit tethering, fastening, chaining, tying or restraining a dog to a stationary object for more than three hours a day or for more than six hours a day on a trolley system, a cable system that allows a dog to run several feet between two fixed points.

If passed, violators would be charged with a misdemeanor and local government could vary the regulations by ordinance.

"I can't make people love their dogs the way I do, but I can get them to treat them with a little more respect," Bonturi said Wednesday from a civil engineer's office on Lady's Island where she works and where her drafting table is cluttered with photographs, e-mails and research on dog chaining.

For now, county pet owners are allowed to chain dogs to a stationary object for as long as they want as long as the dog is properly vaccinated and has access to adequate shelter, water and food, according to Capt. Allen Horton of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office in charge of Animal Control.

But the law isn't strict enough for Bonturi, who said that chaining dogs for prolonged periods is psychologically abusive and inhumane, not to mention unhealthy and dangerous.

Bonturi said permanently chained dogs are aggressive; a fact supported by research from the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

According to the research, between 1979 and 1998, out of 227 reports of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans in the U.S., 17 percent involved dogs restrained on their owners' property at the time of the attack.

And 58 percent of reports involved unrestrained dogs on their owners' property; 24 percent involved unrestrained dogs off their owners' property; and roughly 1 percent involved a restrained dog off its owner's property.

"I have got the feeling it's a problem, but there is not a whole lot of research on the subject ... One study 15 years ago," said County Councilwoman Laura Von Harten, who represents Beaufort and Port Royal.

Von Harten said she wants to prevent animal abuse, but she doesn't want to punish pet owners.

"Dogs are social animals and it's cruel to deprive them of companionship," Von Harten said. "But there are some responsible pet owners who need to tether their pets sometimes, and I don't want to penalize them."

Critics say that prohibiting pet owners from chaining their dogs will cause problems, particularly for low-income families who can't afford to house-train their dogs or build a fence around their property.

In response, Bonturi is setting up a nonprofit that would assist low-income families with chained dogs to build fences so that their dogs can roam more freely.

So far, Bonturi has \$1,000 in pledges.

And Bonturi isn't alone in her quest.

Bonturi has placed petitions at 30 Beaufort locations outlining her cause to create a chain-free county and has collected more than 300 signatures.

Nationwide, six states have adopted some form of chaining regulations, including California, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Connecticut and Maryland.

And several communities have installed ordinances that prohibit chaining, including Chatham County, Ga., and New Hanover County, N.C.

In addition to South Carolina, seven states -- Rhode Island, North Carolina, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, Maine and Pennsylvania -- have pending laws that would prohibit or limit chaining dogs.

Bonturi said though her husband and some of her friends don't quite grasp why the issue is so important, to her, the reason is simple.

"It hurts my heart to know these dogs are out there," Bonturi said