



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

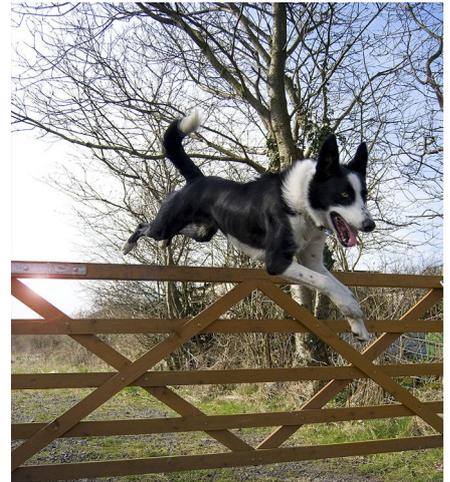
Escaping Dogs

Why does my dog escape?

Dogs are inquisitive and social animals, which, if left to their own devices, will almost certainly seek entertainment elsewhere. It is important to remember that escaping behaviour usually gets worse, rather than improve if not modified. This is because once the dog learns they can escape, they are able to satisfy themselves in some way by being out. A multipoint approach is best.

Identify your dog!

Have your dog properly identified. We recommend a tag with your name, address and phone number. Put it on a secure collar: the collar should be firm, but not tight. The collar should be on the dog at all times he or she is not right beside you.



Micro-chipping is highly recommended, just in case the tag falls off or the dog loses the collar. Remember always keep your details up to date with your microchip company, the RSPC and your local council databases. Always have an alternate contact registered for extra protection. Identification on pets is a vital link in getting an animal home should they be lost. The RSPCA “VIP” (Very Important Pet) tag is available for your pets and is directly linked to our 24 hour hotline for lost pets (1300 36 37 36).

Provide a secure area

It is unrealistic and irresponsible to expect dogs to stay in a yard or acreage if it is not secure. Fences must be high enough to prevent the dog jumping over, and made of material the dog cannot climb up, (zincalume or colour bond sheeting work well) and also continued into the ground to prevent the dog digging under. Check with your local council in regarding local law fencing requirements.

If a secure fence is not feasible, perhaps you need to think about confining the dog in a smaller secure yard or pen (see our information sheets DENNING or CRATING.) We do not recommend any collar or system that involves an aversive method as they do not address the cause of problem behaviours. Containment collars operate by creating a negative association when the dog approaches the fence. Unfortunately, you cannot control what is on the other side of the fence, or why your dog approaches. A curious child who wants to say hello may encourage your dog to approach the fence, only to shock them when they get close! This is a very reasonable reason for your dog to be wary of children, or so your dog thinks (see BARKING CONTROL AND CONTAINMENT SYSTEMS information sheet.)



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Make sure the dog is cool in summer and warm enough in winter, comfortable and relaxed there. The dog must have adequate food, water and shelter from the weather. Remember that dogs should only be confined for short periods, and not left alone for more than 10 hours.

Create an interesting interactive environment

Dogs respond well to variety and interesting challenges. Provide a digging pit, an interactive Tuggy, and lots of toys that inspire dogs to use their natural abilities in appropriate ways. Rotate these activities so that there is something different every day (see our sheet ENTERTAINING YOUR DOG.)

Teach your dog that being on its own is a good thing.

Encourage your dog to be calm on their own for short periods of time then start to extend this period for longer and longer (see our information sheet HOME ALONE.)

Use meal time to your advantage

Make your dog work for its dinner: put food in a treat ball or freeze in an ice cream container. Alternatively take time to teach your dog good manners and use part of their meal as training treats.

Adequate exercise

Make sure your dog has 20 minutes of activity a day. This can be a brisk walk, a game of fetch, a swim, or training in the home.

Avoid Routine

Try to avoid routines of leaving the house like gathering keys and bags, shutting windows, patting the dog etc. Vary your routines and keep them low key so as not to alert the dog to your departure ahead of time.

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a common and serious problem, which also generally gets worse with time. For this reason it is best to get the dog prompt, expert treatment from a Veterinary Behaviourist (specialist in medicine and behaviour) if you think your dog may be escaping due to separation anxiety. Treatment involves teaching the dog to not be anxious but calm and relaxed when you are away (see info sheet HOME ALONE). Sometimes medication may help, but it is seldom effective without simultaneous appropriate training (see our sheet SEPARATION ANXIETY).

Fear

The other reason it is most likely to be is that the dog has got a fright by something and escaped trying to escape the fearful event. The two most common things that frighten dogs are thunderstorms and fireworks. Keep track of when the escaping occurs and if it happens only when there are storms, fireworks, or other loud noises (such as planes or hot air balloons, guns, etc)



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then that could be the reason why. See our information sheet relating to FEAR OF THUNDER AND NOISES to find out what to do.

A final note: getting another canine companion may not be the best solution. Sometimes you end up with TWO dogs, rather than ONE that escape, and have double the trouble.

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