



## RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

# Fence Running

If you have a dog who enjoys chasing your neighbour's dog up and down the fence, you are not alone! This is a very common behaviour for dogs. Do you see it as a problem? Though it might appear to be good exercise, this behaviour can often develop serious behaviour issues and even cause injury to your dog.

### Injury

A dog that fence runs can unfortunately injure itself and the other dog. Scratches from snares on fences, injuries from the other dog's claws or teeth etc, twisted and pulled muscles etc. When a dog is highly aroused, as fence-runners are, they often don't see obstacles in their way.

### Adrenalin Habit

If practiced frequently, fence running increases the adrenalin in your dog's system. Your dog can become addicted to this adrenalin fix and seek out opportunities to fence run. A dog who is constantly highly aroused and never gets a chance to calm down or have a break may react the same aroused way to other things in the environment such as children playing, people passing the house, people on bikes, postmen passing etc.

### Stress

Fence running can increase frustration as the dog is in pursuit of the dog next door or the 'object' on the other side of the fence. This can also lead to increased stress levels which can be detrimental to your dog's health and wellbeing.

### Fence aggression

Dogs who fence run can often become aggressive through all fences and associate other dogs with heightened stress levels and frustration.

### Boredom

If there is nothing else better to do in the yard, often dogs will resort to other behaviours such as fence running. Appropriate exercise, both physical and mental is extremely important for a dog.

So what management and prevention can you put in place? Suggestions below:

### Blocking access

Try restricting your dog's access to the fence (particularly when you are not home). This can be done by erecting a temporary double fence, blocking your dog's access to the fence by keeping them in another part of the yard, or keeping your dog in a den or crate while you are out or can't supervise them. Refer to our info sheets Denning and Crating for management.





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### Using visual barriers

Often, when dogs can't see the dog next door, they lose interest in fence running with them. This means covering up all the gaps or holes in the fence, or if you have a chain wire fence, blocking the line of sight by using shade cloth, panels and/or planting hedge shrubs. Installing a double fence along the existing fence about 2 meters apart and covering the fence with shade cloth can be a good start.

There are also some excellent solid fences available, and even though expensive, can be a good option.



### Redirection

If your dog is still interested in fence running after you have prevented or restricted their access to the fence, make sure you are able to redirect his behaviour to a more appropriate behaviour. Work with things that your dog loves. For example, if your dog loves tennis balls, teach your dog that when they are outside and wanting to fence chase that chasing a tennis ball is more rewarding.

Make sure your dog has adequate mental and physical stimulation. Refer to our info sheets 'Entertaining Your Dog, Kongs, Treat dispensing toys and Tug-O-War'.

### Reward

Remember to reward your dog when they get it right! The more a dog is rewarded for behaviour, the more they will repeat it. What you are working against is that fence running is rewarding in itself to your dog so find what your dog really likes and use this as your power!

### Punishment

The RSPCA is against the use of any form of punishment which contravenes our five freedoms for animals. We also don't believe that punishment is the best way to manage problem behaviours. Simply shouting at your dog or getting mad at them for fence running is counterproductive. Your dog thinks you are getting in on the act too! In fact you may be rewarding the dog with the attention given and cause the behaviour to increase in frequency rather than reduce the behaviour as intended. Always teach your dog what you would like them to do in each situation and reward them when they get it right! Refer to our information sheet 'Why We Don't Use Punishment'.