



## Critters corner presents:

### Loving the Leash

#### Your Dog and the Leash

Keeping your dog attached to a leash when you're outdoors together, whether it's on a city street or a nature trail, is probably the smartest move you can make. The leash is a very simple device; however, it's the most valuable tool you possess. The ideal leash is a five- or six-foot leather lead that's sturdy and easy on the hands: It can be as plain as a piece of clothesline or as elaborate as the retractable type. Whichever style you prefer, here are some of the best reasons to use a leash consistently.

#### **It's the Law**

Workers at any emergency veterinary clinic will be able to provide you with countless tales of heartbreak resulting from owners' inability to control of their pets. In increasing numbers, communities have taken the decision about leashing out of your hands by enforcing it. In addition to licensing and poop-scooping laws, local governments wisely want to protect individuals and property from damage by requiring that dogs are leashed when out in public places.

#### **Safety Measures**

Emergency veterinarians have heard so often from owners of so-called "hit-by-car" victims the old mantra: "He's never done that before." In other words, their dog had never before decided to dart out into the street to chase a neighborhood cat or squirrel or to pursue some elusive odor. In too many instances, the pet never gets a second chance. Even if you believe your dog is smart and well behaved, and you feel that he's suitably wary of automobiles, consider the driver's point of view. Among other things, drivers simply might not see your dog emerging from behind a parked car or from around a corner, or they may be going too quickly to stop.

#### ***Dangers Abound in the City***

For animals, it's a precarious world out there in the city. Even a few slurps from a puddle of spilled antifreeze (a fairly common occurrence) could easily have fatal consequences. But that's not all your dog can get into; there's improperly applied rat poison, pesticide, rotten food, discarded chicken bones, half-eaten chocolate bars, even the parasite-infested stools of other dogs. All represent potential dangers for your curious pet. A leash will limit your dog's access to these harmful substances and help ensure its continued health and well-being.

#### **Clean Up**

Like it or not, you have a responsibility as a citizen and as a decent person to clean up your pet's waste – whether or not local law requires it. If your dog is cavorting 50-yards away from you, on a beach, on a trail, or on a playground, you may not be able to properly monitor his "bathroom habits." Just because a place is tranquil and deserted when you and your dog are there doesn't mean that others won't eventually come along to enjoy it, too. Use a long leash in such public situations and keep a handle on affairs.

#### **Respect Others**

Not everyone likes dogs. A lot of people — many children for example — are frightened of them. While you may know your dog is the sweetest pet that ever lived and would never harm anyone, strangers don't always understand. Even your verbal assurances as your pet merrily gallops to greet someone may do nothing to put their fears to rest.

#### ***Dangers Abound in the Country***

It's difficult to restrict your pet from roaming freely when you're hiking in the woods or out in a rural area. If you cannot resist the temptation to let him off lead, at least train him to respond immediately to a command such as "Come!" or "Down!" Be aware that wildlife, such as rabid raccoons or bats, not to mention the quills of the porcupine, can pose a serious threat — as can dangerous cliffs, outcroppings, or stagnant pools of water.

And if you're on the trail, or on certain beaches, remember that a horse and rider might be just around the corner. The combination of an uncontrolled barking dog, a spooked horse, and an inexperienced horseman is a recipe for disaster — not to mention litigation. But if you keep your dog on leash, you won't have this or any other problem ... and your dog will never get lost in the woods - unless, of course, you're the one who forgets the path home.