

# Factsheet

## Create a Miracle For a Backyard Dog

**Many dogs spend their entire lives in “solitary confinement,” trapped at the end of a chain or in a small pen, suffering through frightening thunderstorms, suffocating heat, and bitter cold, often without vital medical care, aching for friendship.**

### You can help . . .

Begin by letting neglectful neighbors know exactly what needs to be done in a noncritical way so as to try to avoid triggering their resistance. The owner may surprise you by fixing the problems, but if she or he is not receptive, check your state’s anti-cruelty statutes at [www.lawsources.com](http://www.lawsources.com). Codes for particular cities are available at [www.municode.com](http://www.municode.com)—and all should be available at your local library. The law usually allows people to keep dogs outdoors—chained, penned, or otherwise confined—in all weather, as long as certain conditions are met, e.g., shelter from rain. Identify the violations and call in an investigator from your humane society, animal control, or sheriff’s office to achieve compliance. (See enclosed “What to Do If You Spot Animal Abuse” for details.) Be persistent. It pays!

If the situation is substandard but not illegal, befriend the dog’s guardians. Whatever you do, don’t criticize them, or they’ll become angry. Ask permission to take the dog for walks. You could perhaps say that you were given some dog toys/a sturdy water bucket/running line/swivel to prevent tangling—things that you have no use for—and rather than throw them out, you’d like their dog to have them. Visit the dog regularly but without making a nuisance of yourself. Many dogs have had their whole lives gradually changed, and many dogs have eventually been given to those who care for them, all because of patient and friendly intervention. If you are able to gain custody of the dog, the enclosed “Animal Shelters: Hope for the Homeless” and “Finding the Right Home” brochures will aid you in placing the dog.

Remember, hot weather can be especially deadly for dogs left outside without shade or water. To help prevent heat exhaustion, make sure animals have shade and water (in an anchored bucket or a heavy bowl).

Because the dog’s owner may not be paying close attention to the dog’s well-being, please take it upon yourself to watch for symptoms of overheating, such as restlessness, excessive thirst, heavy panting, lethargy, lack of appetite, dark tongue, rapid heartbeat, fever, vomiting, and lack of coordination. If the dog displays any of these symptoms, get him or her to shade immediately and call a veterinarian. Lower her body temperature gradually by providing water to drink, applying a cold towel or an ice pack to the head, neck, and chest, or immersing the dog in tepid (not cold) water.

Cold weather also spells extra hardship for outdoor dogs, who can suffer from frostbite, exposure, and dehydration when water sources freeze. If you see a dog who has inadequate shelter, offer to build him or her a warm, durable doghouse (see enclosed “Legal Shelter for Your Dog”). Remind the dog’s owner to increase the animal’s food rations during winter (when more calories are being burned in order to keep warm) and to be sure that animals are free of internal parasites, which can rob them of vital nutrients.

Call PETA’s Domestic Animal Issues & Abuse Department if you have tried all the above options to reach out and save the life an outdoor dog but to no avail.

**Thank you for deciding to make a difference for the animals. Good luck. You can do it!**