

KEEPING THEM SAFE!

By Shelley Camm

Fences and Gates

1. Put a clip of some type on your gate fence. This way when you open a gate you have a physical reminder in your hand to close it again. As well it prevents the dog from accidentally opening the gate.



2. Carabiners (aka Karabiners), "Fireman's snaps", or safety snaps are available from Farm Supply stores, hardware stores and even Dollar stores. They come in a variety of sizes, find one that fits in the "safety latch" of your gate closure to keep the gate locked.
3. All of us take every precaution to ensure the gate is locked behind us, but are you SURE that the mailman, meter reader, or your son or daughter has made sure they locked it when they came in carrying two armloads of books, boxes, etc? Take a few seconds every time to look and make sure the gate is locked before letting the dog out.
4. Put a lock on your gate to prevent meter readers from accidentally leaving the gate open.
5. If you have chain link or wood fence – walk the perimeter daily – busy paws can create an escape route in just a few minutes a day. As well in areas where winters are more severe, "frost heave" can lift your posts a couple of inches a year creating just enough space for smaller dogs to squeeze through.
6. I am not a huge fan of electric fence – but if it is the only option due to local zoning regulations – be sure to check batteries in the collars and the fence line every time you let the dogs out. Also take note, that once again in climates where there is significant snow accumulation the radio signal may not be able to get through the snow, and therefore the collar DOES NOT WORK.
7. Consider putting a border of paving stones or concrete around the bottom of your fence to prevent your dog from digging out. The bottom of a chain link fence can be encased in a concrete curb for extra protection. Whenever possible a chain link fence should have a bottom rail, and the fence should be tied to it about every 6 inches. Do not use soft metal or plastic ties – these can be chewed off.
8. If possible, when having a fence installed have the gates open to the INSIDE. In that way if a dog bounces against it the gate locks, but does not open.

9. Consider leaving handles off the outside of gates so they cannot be opened from the outside.
10. If locking the gate is not an option in your area, then a gate closer can be made from two eye-bolts and a bungee cord. It should be short enough that it snaps the gate closed hard enough to lock, yet long enough that the gate can be opened with a reasonable amount of effort.
11. Watch your snow build up. What may be a six-foot tall fence in the summer can easily become a foot or two high with the build up of snowdrift, making for an easy walk out of your yard.
12. Put a sign on your gate to advise people that you have dogs. You don't want to put "Beware of Dogs" as that hints that you may have nasty dogs – but "Dogs at Large – Please Close Gate Securely" could remind someone to double check the gate behind them.

If your dog does escape...

1. Never chase the dog, as your dog may take it as a game and run out into traffic. If you can't coax the dog to you, then run in the opposite direction to a safe area, and make your dog think it is a game chasing you!
2. Always have a microchip in your dog and have the chip registered and keep your contact information on the chip current!
3. Don't put your dog outside without ID. If he does accidentally get out he stands the best chance of being returned if he can be caught and identified.

Collar hazards

1. Don't use a choke collar as an everyday collar for your dog. It can get caught on the fence and hang your pet, or the ring can slip between the boards of a deck and your dog can injure or kill itself trying to escape.
2. If you have multiple dogs make sure collars are not overly loose. The jaw of one can get caught in the collar of another, causing potential injury (broken jaws) and death by strangulation.
3. Consider investment in a "breakaway" collar. These collars are made especially to prevent strangulation accidents, and yet have a mechanism for walking your dog safely on them without worry about the collar coming undone.

Car Safety Hazards

1. Whenever possible, a dog should be transported in a crate when in a car. A sudden stop at high speed due to impact, can torpedo a dog into the windshield resulting in injury and death.
2. Crates should be secured to avoid them becoming a projectile in an accident.
3. If your vehicle is not capable of carrying a crate then invest in a doggie seat belt – they buckle into the human seat belts to prevent injury from sudden stops.

4. Don't let your dog stand on the armrests to reach its head out the window. Not only can the dog be thrown out the window into traffic if an accident occurs, but eye injuries due to flying bugs or debris are quite common
5. Riding in the back of a pickup loose or tied, is one of the most dangerous things people can let their dogs do. I once saw a dog thrown out of the bed of a pickup when its owner turned a corner and the tailgate was down because they were also carrying a load of lumber. The dog was uninjured and took off running down the road after the truck – but I don't know if it ever got safely home.
6. Allowing a dog to ride on your lap while you are driving is just plain dangerous, for you, your dog and everyone else on the road at that time. All it will take is your dog jumping on your arm when you are the least bit inattentive to pull your vehicle into oncoming traffic. It is just a very dangerous practice – don't let it start!
7. Dogs should always be transported in the back seat of a car, even if they are in a crate. If airbag warnings advise that a child under 12 could be killed by the deployment of the airbag, your dog does not stand even as good a chance as a child, being smaller and lighter than many children.

Other Safety Hazards

1. Dogs that are tied up with a rope or chain risk hanging themselves by jumping over something which doesn't leave them enough slack to touch the ground on the other side.
2. Don't leave chip bags/plastic bags lying around. A greedy dog after crumbs can get their heads caught and asphyxiate themselves. Ditto for the bags newspapers come in. For safety's sake tie multiple knots in plastic bags before throwing them out, and open cellophane bags flat so they cannot get their heads in them.
3. I don't know if it is possible to teach a dog the dangers of thin ice or not, – but they would be best to learn about it on leash when you are there so you can haul them out again. Do not let your dog play on ice in rivers, streams, or ponds, and if there is frozen water about don't let your dog loose outside – you never know when the ice may be just soft enough for your dog to fall through.
4. Watch tools that are left outside. A dog doesn't realize that a boxcutter blade, or jigsaw blade is dangerous – until they cut themselves on it.
5. Always double check house doors to make sure they are closed. The wind can pop them open.
6. Screen doors and windows present a hazard in that a dog can rip the screen trying to get out and escape. Make sure that if you have a sliding patio door or a window within reach of the dog, the glass is only left open a crack unless you are there to supervise your dog.
7. Check your dog's toys frequently. Four problems that I have known of personally come to mind. First, latex toys can be easily ripped up once they are punctured, and large pieces swallowed, which can cause intestinal blockage. If your dog has punctured a latex toy...throw it out and replace no matter how much of a favourite it may be. Knotted rope toys should be a SUPERVISED toy only, and disposed of if they start to shred. Unknown to me one of my dogs swallowed one

a thread at a time and required life saving emergency to remove an 8 foot rope of threads that was cutting through his intestines. Chew hooves, are another danger when they get small down to the point some dogs will swallow the last piece. The pointed end can get stuck in the pyloric valve like a cork, once again requiring life saving surgery after the dog has bloated. Rawhides can also present a choking hazard if you aren't supervising – dogs can be greedy and try to swallow a piece that is far too large – resulting in choking when it will not pass down the throat. Also choose toys like you were choosing them for a small child – do not buy toys where the eyes or any other small parts can be removed and swallowed. Make sure toys are "size appropriate".

8. A ball that is size appropriate for a dachshund could lodge in the windpipe of a larger dog such as a mastiff, effectively cutting off its air supply and suffocating the dog.
9. If you want your dog out with you while you work in the garden in an unfenced area – use a rope tied to an old tire. Your dog will not be able to take off and get into trouble.
10. If your dog jumps at the door when the doorbell rings, or someone pulls into the driveway – consider a screen door lock – they will prevent the door from flying open giving your dog an opportunity to get into a dangerous situation. A few different styles are available from hardware and recreational vehicle stores.



11. Swimming pools present their own hazards in summer and winter. Take every precaution with a pool that you would with a toddler. Fence the pool separately so your dog does not have access. If you do allow your dog to swim in the pool – teach him where the stairs are so he can swim to them and get out in the summer, if he falls in when you are not there. In the winter solar blankets or pool covers present their own threat. A dog can walk onto the blanket and it can stretch or tear throwing the dog into the water. A dog can also get caught UNDER a solar blanket and be unable to get out.
12. Pools are not the only source of drowning. Some puppies develop a fascination with toilets and in looking for input for this article I was told of a puppy that had drowned in a toilet by falling in head first. Keep the seat cover DOWN! If they are very small they can even fall into a water bucket head first and get stuck there.
13. Backyard ponds, while not an issue to a larger dog, can also be a drowning danger to a small puppy, the sides are plastic and will become slippery with algae growth. If your puppy falls in when left unattended they may not have a way to get out and they could become exhausted and drown.
14. Never use temporary fencing that a puppy can knock down, go over, get under or squeeze through. Once a puppy realizes it can escape it will challenge fences over and over, at the risk of its own life.

15. If you do agility with your dogs, don't leave them out to play unsupervised when agility equipment is also out. Dogs can and have gotten caught in the chute and some have injured themselves running on equipment.
16. Before backing up your vehicle, make sure that any dog on the property is safely out of harm's way. If they are lying down behind your vehicle, you may not see them, and if the dog is older it may not hear the car start in time to get out of the way.
17. Rodenticides containing warfarin or other blood thinning chemicals should never be used. First, while you may place them safely away from your dog and think that they are safe, someone else may unknowingly place it right where they have full access, and being attracted to the scent they will eat it without a second thought. Without your knowledge that this has been ingested it will slowly and painfully kill your dog.
18. Look up poisonous plants and ensure you don't have them where a puppy could chew or play with them. Philodendrons definitely come to mind, however since I don't keep plants anymore I can't say with certainty which other plants should be included.
19. There are several food groups that dogs enjoy, but which can cause illness and death. Good quality chocolate, grapes, onions, garlic, and raisins are all included in this category. Remember that just because your dog likes something, does not mean that it is good for them.
20. Just as you would put prescription medications out of reach of children, make sure that they are out of reach of your dog. Do not leave bottles sitting on end tables or counters where they can be reached by a curious puppy. Also if you have a cat, make sure that they are not placed anywhere that the cat can "bat" them into reach of a dog.

NEVER ASSUME!! Just because your dog has been safe 1,000 times before, does not mean that it is safe all the time. You never know what will cause a dog that has always been perfect off leash, to suddenly bolt and run. It could be a cat, a squirrel or a gunshot – but if you don't have control for that split second...it could cost your friend's life. [Please, keep them safe, and take the extra few seconds to make sure they are.](#)

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