

I am writing about an issue that has gone unaddressed for too long-- that of the perpetually chained or penned, so-called "outside" or "backyard" dog.

There is no sadder sight than these outcast, forlorn, forgotten animals, relegated to the status of lawn ornaments and virtually ignored by the family.

Many chained or penned dogs are seriously neglected. They lack fresh, unfrozen water, adequate housing, hygiene and the most basic veterinary care, including vaccinations required by law. Every winter such dogs are found frozen to death. At other times of the year they may be left to starve until they die.

Chaining is not only inhumane for dogs, but has taken a severe toll on this nation's children. In the period from October 2003 through September 2008, there have been at least 231 children killed or seriously injured by chained dogs across the country. Chained dogs, unsocialized with humans, can become very territorial of their tiny space, and any two year old who wanders into this space can be attacked and killed before adults can intervene. One attack in July of 2007 led to the death of a 5 year old with Down's Syndrome near Atlanta, Georgia. The child was attacked and killed by a rottie mix chained behind the house of a next-door neighbor.

Furthermore, researchers are confirming the link between animal abuse and neglect and abuse and neglect of children and perpetration of future crimes.

Austria is the latest nation to ban the chaining of dogs, completely prohibiting the practice. Connecticut is the first state in the nation to limit chaining, California and Texas have also set time limits on chaining. There are over 120 communities or counties in at least 35 states with limits on chaining. Our state or city needs to be a part of this growing movement to eliminate chaining of dogs.

The wording of model legislation and a letter to send to state representatives can be found by visiting the website www.dogsdeservebetter.org.