

Homeless Pets Foundation

THE CANINE ESCAPE ARTIST



Escaping is a serious problem for both pet guardian and Spot, as it can have tragic consequences. If Spot is running loose, she is in danger of being hit by a car, being injured in a fight with another dog, or being hurt in a number of other ways. Additionally, the guardian is liable for any damage or injury Spot may cause and a fine may be required if Spot is picked up by an animal control agency. In order to resolve an escaping problem, first determine not only how Spot is escaping, but also why she's escaping.

Why Dogs Escape - Social Isolation and Frustration

Spot may be escaping because she is bored or lonely, left outside for long periods of time, or lacks adequate exercise, social interaction or mental stimulation. The following recommendations may help:

- Keep Spot inside when supervision is unavailable. If Spot is destructive when left alone in the house, consider using a crate to confine her. The best way to prevent an escape is to leave Spot inside the house and to supervise her when she's outside.
- Make sure Spot is receiving plenty of exercise. Spend time walking Spot, playing fetch in the yard, or taking her to the dog park.
- Teach Spot a few commands and/or tricks. Practice these commands and/or tricks every day for 5-10 minutes. Sign up Spot for an ARF U training class for additional mental stimulation by calling 925.296.3111.
- Provide interesting toys to keep Spot busy when alone. Rotate the toys to keep them interesting.
- If working very long days, take Spot to a doggie day care, or ask a friend or neighbor to walk her.

Fears and Phobias

Spot may be escaping in response to something she is afraid of such as loud noises, thunderstorms, firecrackers or construction sounds. If this is the case, identify what is frightening Spot and desensitize her to it. Check with a veterinarian about giving Spot an anti-anxiety medication for behavior modification.

Leave Spot indoors when she is likely to encounter the fear stimulus. Mute noises by turning on a television, radio or loud fan.

Provide a safe place for Spot. Observe where she likes to go when she feels anxious, then allow access to that space, or create a similar space for her to use when the fear stimulus is present.

How Dogs Escape

Some dogs jump or climb fences. Add an extension to the fence which tilts in toward the yard. The extension does not necessarily need to make the fence much higher, as long as it tilts inward at about a 45-degree angle. Move tables and other objects that can act as a launching pad for Spot to jump over the fence.

Spot may also dig under or chew through the fence, learn to open a gate, or use any combination of these methods to get out of the yard. If Spot is digging her way outside the yard, bury chicken wire at the base of the fence with the sharp edges rolled inward, place large rocks at the base, or lay chain-link fencing on the ground. If Spot has learned how to open a gate, modify the gate or latch to keep her contained.

Knowing how Spot escapes will help identify what needs to be modified to the yard. However, until the reason is known why Spot escapes and the motivation to escape is decreased, the problem cannot be successfully resolved.

Finally, neuter or spay Spot. Studies show that neutering will decrease roaming in about 90 percent of the cases.