

Dog Frequently Escapes Yard

Your dog is probably bored, keep her entertained.

By September Morn

Q. I have a 3-year-old female Pit Bull. She is very well trained. I had even trained her to stay in my front yard without supervision, and she never left the yard. However, I recently left my husband and my two other dogs. Since I have moved into my new place she has been digging out from under the fence and running around the neighborhood. I keep blocking the holes, and she keeps digging more. What should I do?

A. It's likely your dog stayed home before because the other dogs were her "pack" and they stayed home, too. Now she has nobody to play with because she's in the yard by herself, so she's escaping to find company and interesting things to do. You'll need to do more than block the holes as she digs them, because that only encourages her to dig another escape tunnel.

You need to make her outdoor area truly escape-proof. This may mean she can't have the run of the whole yard while you're gone, and you may have to put in an escape proof kennel-fenced run on a concrete pad.

The usual reason dogs escape from their yards is because things are more interesting outside the yard than inside. That makes sense, right? To solve this problem, you'll need to make life more interesting for your dog to satisfy her need for the mental and physical stimulation she used to get from the other two dogs.

The best way to do this is to start doing interesting activities with her. Enroll in a reward-based training class. If she's already gone through a basic manners class, see if you can find a class focused on agility, rally, obedience, or other activity that will both strengthen your bond with her and give her mental and physical exercise.

When she needs to be outdoors without you -- in her newly escape-proofed area -- give her several food-puzzle toys to keep her occupied. You can actually feed her an entire meal in food-puzzle toys, which is a great way to minimize a dog's boredom when they're home alone.

Also, since she's an adult, she shouldn't need to potty as frequently as when she was a pup, and she probably knows not to chew on your furniture. She may be more content to hang out inside the house while you're at work than out in the yard.