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DOGS ARE SNOWMEGEDDON'S FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

Sentenced to life outside, chained or penned dogs suffer in blizzard-like conditions



February 10, 2010, Altoona, PA —Snowmegeddon, a nickname given to the recent blast of snow storms hitting the east coast, has its share of human victims, but the weather's forgotten victims suffer silent and often deadly fates: America's chained and penned dogs. Unable to escape their tether or pen to find appropriate shelter as they would do in the wild, they await the mercy of humans, humans for whom mercy is not high on the list of priorities.

Overwhelmed with anywhere from 20-35 inches of snow, the region's residents dig out their cars,

their homes, and their driveways, but repeatedly leave their chained dogs to fend for themselves. Doghouses become buried in the snow, not even visible as the lawn ornaments they once were.

"Anyone who leaves his/her dog chained or penned out in the severe winter weather with two feet of snow, below zero wind chills, and temperatures in the single digits should be convicted without question of animal cruelty," says Tamira Ci Thayne, founder and CEO of Dogs Deserve Better, a nonprofit working to bring dogs into the home and family.



The nonprofit gets hundreds of heartbreaking e-mails during periods of inclement weather. Emails such as this one from Virginia: "Last month they didn't dig the dog out from his house for three days, no food either. When I returned to the property today there were no tracks in the yard. The dog had wrapped himself around another stilt causing him to have no room to move, get to food, nothing. Another neighbor came and dug out the doghouse."

Or this report, from West Virginia: "Rotties are tied up behind a house with no food or water for four days now. I sent animal control and when they knocked on the door, a 75-year-old lady in a walker answered and said she can't get out back to take care of them. Apparently her family stops by once in a while to give them some food or water. But with the snow they haven't been there in some time."

This scenario repeats itself in towns all across our nation, as dogs await better laws which will protect them from both the cruelties of man and freezing temperatures. As winter storms ravage the country, bringing below-zero wind chills and arctic temperatures in many areas, dogs hold on as best they can. Those that freeze to death are rarely reported, quickly disposed of by owners looking to avoid legal consequences for their failure to properly care for their pets.

Dogs Deserve Better, a national nonprofit organization which works solely on behalf of chained and penned dogs, warns that chaining of dogs on a continual basis is cruel for many reasons, not the least of which is the danger of death in sub-zero temperatures. Because dogs are pack animals, they can become neurotic or aggressive due to lack of socialization with humans, and in 2009 alone at least 55 children in the U.S. were killed or seriously injured enough to make headlines after attacks by chained or penned dogs.

The real tragedy is that the cruelty and danger caused by tethering dogs is completely avoidable through legislation. Laws limiting or banning chaining result in safer towns for our children and more compassionate living for Man's Best Friend.

So far four states have passed limitations on chaining: California, Texas, Connecticut, and Nevada. Hundreds of cities and counties have passed limitations or flat-out bans.

Please visit the website at DogsDeserveBetter.org to learn more about dog chaining, the reasons it is cruel to dogs and dangerous to humans, and to find a local area representative.

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