

# Keeping Your Tibetan Mastiff Safe & Sound

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*"On some level, dogs are like a 3-year-old in a grocery store; Every now and then, they are going to throw a tantrum, and the mother's going to be mortified."*



I grew up in a typical suburb but our cousins lived in a more rural area. I well remember how their lab mix was never on a leash or behind a fence. He would disappear for hours and return at dinnertime. Thinking back on it now, his wandering ways weren't something I was particularly concerned about and I doubt his owners were either. Times were simpler and more carefree. I don't believe he was neutered so he probably contributed happily to the neighborhood population. Amazingly he was neither hit by a car nor shot by an angry neighbor. He enjoyed a long and contented life.

Times have certainly changed.

We now know, of course, how ill advised this type of situation is and the problems it can cause. The days of letting our dogs roam freely off-property are long gone.

## **The Importance of Spaying/Neutering**

It is grossly irresponsible to allow any intact dog the freedom to wander the neighborhood and the current numbers that reflect pet over-population should be a concern to everyone. Making the challenging decision to become a Tibetan Mastiff owner also means that you accept the obligation to safeguard the health and welfare of your pet and the pets in your area. Prevent unplanned or unwanted litters by keeping your Tibetan Mastiff secure within your home, on-leash or behind protective fencing. Discuss with your breeder his/her recommended timing for having your dog spayed/neutered. It is your responsibility to see that breeding is left to those ethical and accountable breeders who make a serious lifelong commitment to the puppies they breed.

## **Safety**

The matter of safety is an important one and, quite simply, a loose dog is a dog at risk. It is the rare Tibetan Mastiff that is trained to obey commands off-leash so shouting "Come" or "Here" is often futile. A Tibetan Mastiff running free may easily be struck by a car, attacked by a roaming dog or other animal or become lost. If you live in a rural area and your Tibetan Mastiff is found bothering farm animals or livestock he could very well be shot. Animal cruelty cases abound so if your dog can be coaxed he can be stolen or simply abused by some sick individual. Only by keeping your dog close to you on-leash or allowing him/her the freedom of a contained yard will you know that your dog is safe from danger.

## **Protecting You and Your Dog Under The Law**

Like it or not, we live in a litigious society where dog owners are often targeted for lawsuits. Many of these suits are warranted as every state has some law in place that requires you to keep your dog under control at all times so loose dogs are a liability. If your dog is off-leash or is not confined behind a fence, then he is certainly not under your care and control.

I have always been fascinated with the law so I enjoy watching shows that center on legal issues of both truth and fiction. The program "The People's Court" often features some dog-related cases and, in every instance, the owner of the dog that is off-leash or uncontained bears the cost of damages. Defenses of "He provoked my dog" or "She lashed out with her foot" or "Their dog growled first" all fall on deaf ears if theirs was the dog off-leash. And these are only monetary damages; there are cases where your dog could forfeit his life. Your dog may suffer the severest of consequences because of your lack of control.

## **Off-Leash Dog Parks**

With the advent of off-leash dog parks, pet owners have found a way to experience the joy of watching their dogs run free. A word of caution must go out to Tibetan Mastiff owners however, as the very primitive and guardian nature of this breed means that extra caution must be observed. Tibetan Mastiffs are, as a rule, very territorial. Your maturing dog may feel the need to protect "his" territory from other dogs even if he has been a visitor to the dog-park previously.

## **Leashes and Fencing**

Teaching your Tibetan Mastiff puppy to walk on leash early in his life is one way to help ensure that he remains safely by your side. Choose well-constructed flat collars and 6 to 8 foot leashes or buy an appropriate Flexi-lead that is suitable for the weight of your dog. Choke collars are NEVER recommended for young puppies and should not be needed for adults if early training is established.



While many TMs are content to stay in a properly fenced area, heaven only knows the secret of the mystical and magical feats of escapism that some determined Tibetan Mastiffs can perform. Whether your dog is able to leap tall fences in a single bound, come equipped with suction cups on paws for climbing or simply smart enough to learn how to unlatch a secure gate, many Tibetan Mastiff breeders know that there are extra precautions that you can take to deter your Tibetan Mastiff from leaving your property.

While no containment is fail-proof, breeders often recommend six-foot fencing of a good-sized yard or run. Strong and durable fencing of chain-link or wood is typical but keep in mind that Tibetan Mastiffs can chew through, go over or tunnel under most any obstacle in their way. If you live in colder climates, consider installing higher fencing to prepare for snow accumulation during the winter months. While those who live in rural areas may feel confident about leaving their dog penned outside during the day those living in residential areas may not find it prudent. An unattended TM may quickly become a barking nuisance or it may be that your dog becomes an easy mark for the neighborhood children to tease, harm and/or release. Installing dependable double latches on gates is always a valuable suggestion. A one-time experience of a hot-wired fence may be an extra precaution for those dogs that are especially stubborn about their need to escape a fenced yard.

While it may work occasionally, it is probably not wise to rely on underground invisible fencing to enclose a Tibetan Mastiff. This stoic breed may well handle charging through if the temptation is great enough, but would not feel inclined to return only to be shocked again. And, with proper training, even should your TM remain on property, the invisible fencing does not keep out stray dogs, other animals, adults or children all who would have unrestricted access to the yard. Any of these scenarios could be potentially dangerous.

At every opportunity, the TMBRN stresses that the Tibetan Mastiff is a GUARDIAN breed. The emphasis is to show that the very make-up of the breed is geared toward protection of yard, home and family from strange animals and people. The very essence of the GUARDIAN nature means that ethical breeders will not sell to anyone who does not have a securely fenced yard. Common sense dictates that breeders and owners should jointly want to do everything in their power to protect the dog and others from all foreseeable harm. It is unfortunate, then, that rejected and disappointed applicants move on to the next breeder on their contact list who will sell them a puppy. (And we can guarantee that you will find that breeder who will sell a puppy at all costs and it won't take much convincing on your part!) You have, however, not bested anyone with your tactics. You may have purchased a Tibetan Mastiff puppy but you have not magically circumnavigated the problem of how to manage the future containment problems that having an unfenced yard and a guardian breed will most assuredly bring.

Be suspicious of that breeder that does not require you to have fencing. And, if you are not willing to erect a fence for your Tibetan Mastiff, you should seriously consider another breed.

Be mindful that even if you are "standing right there", something may catch your TM's attention and he can run into the street to be hit by a vehicle or he may wander away to become lost. Even if you are "standing right there" he can be attacked or engage in a fight with another dog incurring serious injury. Even if you are "standing right there" he can feel that you are being threatened and move to protect you. Without a leash or a fence you have no way to control or protect your Tibetan Mastiff.