

Honorable Senators,

My name is Andrea McMahan, from Duxbury, Vermont. I am the President of the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs, a member of the Green Mountain Dog Club and The Siberian Husky Club of America, a vet tech and the owner of Ripanco Kennels.

Dogs and horses are my passion. I got my first Siberian Husky in 1974 and I was hooked. I spent many years involved in sled dog racing with my young family, running a 6 dog team, a 3 dog jr. team and 2 one dog teams! I learned from some of the best in New England how to care for the dogs we loved. While I eventually grew into a chain link kennel, I used a dog yard system for many years. So I do have a fair amount of experience in housing sled dogs.

Most of the statistics and information I am going to pass on to you comes from an organization called Mush with P.R.I.D.E. (Providing Responsible Information on a Dog's Environment).

The picture I am showing you is the dog yard at Denali National Park in Alaska. The dogs are used in harness to patrol the park in the winter. In the summer, they are a huge tourist attraction.

Tethering sled dogs is a common and traditional method of confining multiple dogs. A controlled scientific study comparing sled dogs confined by tethers to those confined in pens, found no evidence that tethering is either unsafe or inhumane (Haupt K.)

The most common tethering system used is a chain attached to the top of a pole which is 3'-4' in height with a swivel device allowing the chain to travel in a full circle around the pole. A pole of this height is recommended to hold the chain above snow and off the ground. The recommended length of chain is 5'-7'. If the chain is too long it will drag on the ground too much, increasing the chances for a tangle and spreading feces before they can be picked up.

Using a tethering system with a 360 degree swivel as described here with a 6' chain, the dog's play area is about 113 square feet and with a 7' chain is almost 155 square feet. Using the formula as written in H.218 of a chain being 2 x the length of the dog measured from tip of nose to base of tail would put most sled dogs in a 6'-8' chain length. A longer chain would only be a detriment to the safety and hygiene of the dog.

The wording in H.218 regarding tethering of sled dogs is based on science and experience for the safety and wellbeing of the dogs. I ask you please to consider passing the bill as written. This entire bill has been so very carefully studied and worked on by many, many very knowledgeable professional dog people. Even groups that do not normally see eye to eye on animal care are all on board. This bill will be the best bet to give humane officers a sound guideline with some teeth to investigate cruelty and that is what is most important to all of us.

Thank you for your consideration and taking the time to listen to me.

Andrea McMahan  
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