



Hangin' out the washing

Some dogs are highly stimulated by movement and find washing flapping in the breeze is much more exciting than the static toys that may be provided for them. Often dogs that are not given enough exercise, or the opportunity to explore regularly, will be much more likely to seek out other sources of amusement—tugging the washing off the line is a great game! Because dogs LOVE to tug, swinging off the washing becomes a boredom buster. So meeting your dog's mental and physical needs can prevent the clothes line turning into a doggy flying fox.

PREVENTION

Always try to prevent the behaviour from starting. Otherwise the dog's behaviour becomes reinforced by this great game of tug of war. Monitor your dog on the first few occasions when you hang out the washing. Puppies may not be able to reach any of the clothes that are hanging down, so you should watch for the moment your dog is likely to be large enough to do any damage. Have the pup distracted with a treat ball or game while you hang out the washing so they don't focus on the washing being placed on the line..

Never leave washing hanging near the dog's eye level! That's way too tempting to the new dog or pup. So, if you are hanging out towels, sheets or other low hanging items fold them up so they don't hang low.

The obvious solution to this problem is not to leave washing on the line when you are not at home to supervise your dog's behaviour. Alternatively, hang the washing out in an area the dog does not have access to.

If this is impractical, you can foil the dog by placing a barrier around the clothes line.

NOTE

Many people mistakenly think that their dog looks 'guilty' when they return home to find washing torn off the line. In fact, the dog is either reacting to the owner's body language, which it reads (normally correctly) as angry, or it is drawing an association between the owner's homecoming and being punished in the past. It therefore takes up a submissive posture in a subconscious effort to appease. No matter how human-like or intelligent your dog may seem, he is not capable of relating punishment to a 'crime' unless the two occur simultaneously or within five seconds of each other. Therefore, it is absolutely useless to punish a dog hours or even minutes after it has done something 'wrong'. Dogs have no concept of right and wrong and never do things to 'annoy' or 'get even'.

Simply take responsibility for the problem yourself and go about resolving it in a logical way that takes into consideration your dog's limited cognitive abilities and your substantial fund of knowledge.

