

Containment

Proper containment is one of the most important issues in the world of the wolf-dog hybrid. Stories of escapes are all too common.

But All I See is Fencing

Appropriate fencing is vitally important for any canine, but much more so for wolves and wolf-dog hybrids. Any loose canine can find himself in grave danger from moving vehicles, farmers protecting their livestock, and other things too numerous to list. A loose wolf or wolf-dog hybrid is not only subject to these dangers, but you, as the owner of the animal may be subject to fines, arrest, or even jail time if your animal harms a person, another animal, or causes property damage. If you care about your canine keep him/her contained.

With that said, wolves and wolf-dog hybrids cannot be adequately contained by the average fencing used for domestic dogs. Many dogs can be contained with wooden fences, four-foot chain link or ranch fencing. Not so with a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid. Wooden fences, even the wooden privacy fences that are six feet tall are no match for most of these exotic canines. In a short period of time the same jaws/teeth that can inflict 1500 psi in a bite, can make toothpicks of your wooden fence.

Any fence less than six feet tall is little more than a temporary barrier. Most dogs over fifty pounds can easily jump a four foot fence, wolves and wolf-dog hybrids can clear such a fence without touching it. Remember, these animals may be able to jump five to six feet straight up in the air from a sitting position; add a running start and you can easily imagine the same animal sailing over a six to seven foot fence.

Ranch fencing, also called dog fencing is not tall enough to contain a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid and its construction is not sturdy enough for such animals. Between their large teeth and their immense strength, an average wolf or wolf-dog hybrid can rip ranch fencing to shreds in no time, that is, of course, if they don't decide to go through it or over it.

Hate fences altogether and believe that your wolf-dog hybrid can be trained to stay behind an electric, invisible barrier type of fence? Think again! The collars that deliver the shock for those fences do not have prongs long enough to penetrate the thick coat of most of these animals. Further the shock from these types of fencing systems is not strong enough to deter a large dog on a consistent basis if he finds the grass (or neighbor's cat) more appealing on the other side of the barrier. Many wolf-dog hybrids are smart enough to learn how to drain the batteries slowly on these systems and will never even receive a full

shock when crossing the barrier. Or worse, they may cross the barrier, and keep on running because it 'bit them'.

So what will contain the average wolf or wolf-dog hybrid? Zoo quality fencing is the best bet. If you are unsure what that is, visit your local zoo and look at the cages that the animals are kept in. That is essentially what you will need to contain the animal. But before you build such a 'cage' remember that he/she needs room to run and play, so plan on a large area. With that in mind, let's discuss the specifics of what you will need to adequately contain a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid.

Chainlink fabric of 9 gauge is recommended, eight feet in height. The standard chainlink fencing used to surround yards is 13 gauge; these animals need something much stronger. Many wolves and wolf-dog hybrids can chew through 13 gauge in no time, and 11 gauge is only slightly better if the animal is intent on escaping or exploring beyond the barrier. It's best to pay the extra money and get the 9 gauge from the beginning. Yes, it is expensive, and you will probably have to special order it from a fencing contractor. Remember, if using lesser quality, you risk the animal learning that he can escape. Once an animal learns that he can escape his compound, it becomes more difficult to keep him contained.

Along with the 9 gauge chain link fabric you will need heavy-duty poles and hardware. Standard poles are made for 11 and 13 gauge fabric and are not heavy enough to be used with the 9-gauge fabric. Poles should be firmly cemented into the ground every eight to nine feet, not the standard ten feet that is recommended at your local home improvement store.

It is important use a top rail and it is recommended that you also purchase and install lean-in bars. The lean-in bars should have more chain link fabric on them, not barbed wire.

So now it looks like we have all our fencing materials, right? What about the digging? Most wolves and wolf-dog hybrids enjoy digging dens or holes to lie in so the soil cools them. What happens if they dig too close to the fence line? They could easily dig under it, without trying to escape! To prevent dig outs you must install dig guard. Dig guard is chain link fabric that is laid on the ground and attached to the fencing via hog rings or sewn together with heavy duty wire. Dig guard needs to be at least three feet wide and preferably four feet wide or even wider. The dig guard should then be buried to prevent the animals finding the edges and digging under. The compound needs to be dig-guarded the entire length of the fencing; and in any other areas where they might dig out, like the gate.

So now we have the diggers and the jumpers covered. What about climbers? Even though your fence is an appropriate height, with appropriate lean-ins and

dig guards, some wolf-dog hybrids can and will climb right over it. It is highly recommended that you hotwire your containment from the first day your animal is in it. Yes, hotwire, electric fencing, the same thing farmers use to keep their cattle and horses contained. Standard Fido Shock hotwire kits do not work for these animals: the voltage just isn't enough to stop them. What most experienced owners have found they need is a Predator Charger or a weed burner. This can be electric, battery, or solar powered. It is recommended that you have at least two types of power in case one of them fails. On a dark and stormy night you don't want to be slogging through the mud looking for that wolf or wolf-dog hybrid who escaped because the power went out and the hot wire stopped working. Besides the charger, for the hot-wire set-up, you will need insulators, heavy-duty wire, and a testing kit. We recommended that the hot wire be placed at the top and bottom of all fencing. Preferably you will place a strand of hot wire in the middle of the fence also.

Most of the fencing work you can do yourself, if you are so inclined. It will save greatly on the cost. Even if you are an avid do-it-yourselfer, plan on spending at least \$3000 for a fifty by fifty-foot pen. To have the same size pen done by professionals would cost about double that in most areas.

Enrichment

All animals are entitled to an enriched environment. Many companion dogs do lead an enriched life—they live in the house with their human owners, go for walks, have toys, and enjoy visitors of both the human and animal persuasions. They participate in the lives of their families by greeting them when they come home, sleeping on beds and even begging from the table. Unfortunately many wolves and wolf-dog hybrids are not that fortunate—a majority are kept in a pen with little benefit of regular human or even canine companionship from the time they become adolescents to the day they die.

So what exactly is enrichment? Webster's Dictionary defines enrichment as: "to provide quality, abundance." What this means is that the owner must provide a good quality of life for the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid, just as they would provide a good quality of life for themselves and their human families.

So how does one go about enriching a wolf-dog hybrid's life? First take a look at a wolf in the wild. A wild wolf has a territory of several miles to several hundred miles that they explore, hunt, and protect. It's impossible to provide a captive animal with the same amount of space that a wild animal has, but a pen or habitat must be provided that is as natural as possible and as large as finances allow. Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids need a compound that is safe and large enough for them to run full speed without running into a fence or hurting themselves on obstructions found in the habitat.

The habitat should include as many natural substances as possible. It's easier to keep an animal on cement or rock for cleaning purposes, but that is not natural for a wolf. The ground inside the pen should be grass, dirt, rock and sand; with trees, climbing surfaces, perching surfaces, lookouts, and shelter from the elements. Some creative shelters can also double as lookout points and perching surfaces.

Although this is the beginning of enriching the habitat there is so much more to be considered. A simple piece of equipment is far from all that's needed to keep such an intelligent animal happy. It is preferable to provide a wolf-dog hybrid with a variety of shelters and lookouts. Doghouses and lean-to's can help provide these things along with interesting toys and activities.

Another item that exotic canines enjoy is a stock tank to swim or splash in during warmer months. Plastic wading pools are not recommended because they aren't durable; and if your wolf or wolf-dog hybrid swallows pieces of plastic that they have gnawed off, it could cause intestinal problems. Galvanized stock tanks that can be found at ranch and feed stores are best for this purpose. Plan on spending from \$100 to \$300 for a stock tank large enough for the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid to splash around in. Why not build a deck and cover for the tank for the winter months and provide another lookout point or perch?

A wolf or wolf-dog hybrid is extremely inquisitive by nature and needs to be provided with stimulating toys that are changed at least weekly. There are several toys that are perfect for human/canine play. These toys require supervision for learning and to prevent the animal from demolishing them.

Some of them include:

- * IQ Cube™
- * Intellibone™
- * Biscuit ball™
- * Buster cube™

Other toys that can be used for both solo and supervised play can be either purchased or safely made at home. Some of the better purchased ones include:

- * Kong™—These can be filled with peanut butter or a special blended liver pate, along with dog food, biscuits, and other delectables.
- * Jolly Ball™
- * Teaser Ball™
- * Indestruct Ball™

What one wolf or wolf-dog hybrid finds entertaining and enriching, another will ignore. Knowing the animal well by spending a lot of time with him is the best way to determine his favorite toys and activities. Does he enjoy digging?

Provide a safe place to dig in the form of a digging pit or mound of sand and teach him to dig there by using cookies or other buried food treats.

A variety of stuffed toys, although they don't last long, are often appreciated. With any stuffed toy, be mindful of eyes and other parts that can be chewed off and swallowed. A good source for used stuffed toys is the local Salvation Army or Goodwill Store. Be sure to wash them in hot water and bleach before giving to the animals to prevent any transfer of disease.

Many wolf-dog hybrids enjoy chewing – raw, uncooked bones are best for this activity; you may want to search out a butcher shop that is 'bone friendly'. A word of caution—never feed cooked bones, they can splinter and are hazardous to the animal. Always pick up bones after a few days, they do spoil and can cause bacterial infections.

Mealtime is a good time to help enrich the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid's life. Veterinarians recommend that a consistent high quality daily diet be provided, but most animals appreciate your adding treats to the food. A dog biscuit tucked in a bowl of kibble provides an additional treat and something to seek in the bowl. Another suggestion that can make mealtime a more enriching activity is a game called "find and eat." This game is played by hiding small amounts of the rations in different locations around the pen and having the animal locate the food. This simulates eating in the wild to some degree. Another method is a cookie hunt—hide several cookies around the pen, once again enriching, entertaining, and is a natural form of play. Or try experimenting with small tidbits of food that the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid has never experienced. It is recommended that you read about toxic and unsafe edibles; but carrots, celery and most vegetables are fine and provide an interesting oral experience.

One of the best ways to enrich life is with a canine playmate. Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids are not by nature solitary animals and do better with a packmate. An altered playmate of the opposite sex is best. Although not all wolves and wolf-dog hybrids will get along with a canine companion that you choose for them, many will. Introducing your animal to a new canine companion is a slow process with first introductions taking place on neutral territory. When bringing a second canine into your home, you must be prepared to handle occasional spats and disagreements between the animals. Just like humans, animals don't always get along with each other. It is imperative to learn how to safely break up a dogfight and methods to diffuse the tension created by one, should it occur.

The very best enrichment that you can provide the animal is your companionship. You are the pack leader, the master and companion, the 'hunter' and giver of food. Your wolf or wolf-dog hybrid needs to spend a significant amount of time with you. He/she doesn't understand that you have had a bad day at work or that you have other commitments, they only know that you are the pack leader and they miss and want to be with you. How much time is enough? Only the animal

can answer that. A wolf-dog hybrid needs the mental stimulation of games and time with their human pack leader. Games should be in the form of training exercises, walks, grooming, and play. All animals will indicate to their human when they are satisfied with the amount of attention paid to them—you must be able to ascertain what they are telling you. For some wolves and wolf-dog hybrids this is an easy hour a day, however with others it is several hours a day. It is necessary to make the effort to train the animal to behave in the house so you both can spend part of this together time in the comfort of your home. Many wolves and wolf-dog hybrids cannot be easily trained to behave in the house. If that is the case you will need to spend whatever amount of time that your animal needs in his compound. Although this may be inconvenient, remember he/she is essentially in solitary confinement without their human alpha, so your time and companionship are a must.

For a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid that can be safely walked on a leash, walks in unpopulated areas are wonderful forms of enrichment. Allow the animal time to smell and explore the new area; but remember this walk is for the animal not for you, so he or she shouldn't be rushed. Remember while out in public you and your wolf or wolf-dog hybrid are ambassadors for all owners and animals of their type. Act accordingly and carry bags and utensils to appropriately pick up and discard waste.

Enriching an animal's life is a never-ending process, for the animal's entire lifetime. The main component of any enrichment program is human interaction, but it is impossible for any human to spend twenty-four hours a day with their canine friend. Therefore you must provide many enriching, stimulating, safe, and fun activities for your wolf or wolf-dog hybrid. Some of these activities are simple, some more complex, some cheaply provided, and some expensive. As a responsible owner you must provide an enriched quality of life for your canine.