

County should quickly pass tethering legislation

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County Executive Ike Leggett should be commended for initiating Bill 10-10 specifying criteria for humane tethering of pets, usually dogs ["County Council may put dog owners on shorter leash" Oct. 20]. Montgomery County has a tradition for good government and it is time we joined with multiple other jurisdictions, nationwide, that have enacted similar laws.

Bill 10-10 outlines reasonable restrictions to prevent abuse and neglect of helpless animals. It empowers enforcement officers to educate owners who are unaware or unfeeling about appropriate pet care — and rescue animals if necessary.

Tethered animals are also a public health issue. Rabid raccoons, squirrels, even foxes, et al., are a clear problem. Even inside the Beltway, we have sightings and in one incident dogs became involved with a rabid raccoon. Fortunately, they were in a fenced back yard and the owner became aware. While the dogs had received their rabies shots, the owner required anti-rabies treatment. Unsupervised pets, along with humans they contact, are at risk.

Dogs are subject to mental abuse by owners who tether them constantly, which can cause defensive/hostile behavior. This cruel method is deliberately employed by some to produce the proverbial "junk yard" or fighting dog. Dogs deserve laws allowing officers to rescue them in these worst cases and less dramatic cases of simple neglect.

Winter weather will soon be here and many animals will endure extreme conditions — just as they suffer in the summer heat — often without water or adequate shelter. Citizens, please call, write or e-mail the County Council to urge passage of Bill 10-10 without further delay.

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