

Chewing

Chewing is a normal canine behaviour. It's natural and necessary and can have many benefits for your dog. Chewing is a great way to relieve stress or boredom and is a favourite pastime for many dogs. Breeds such as Retrievers were bred to be orally fixated. This makes them great retrievers, but along with this instinct comes the desire to constantly have something in their mouths. Because chewing is a self-rewarding behaviour, setting your dog up for success is the secret to stopping unwanted chewing. If your dog is chewing to relieve stress, anxiety or boredom it's crucial to redirect the chewing to something appropriate because if you simply attempt to stop the unwanted behaviour, it will be replaced by another behaviour. You also need to address the root cause of the problem.

Solutions

- Exercise – Provide plenty of exercise because a tired dog gets in a lot less trouble.
- Confinement – Confine your dog to a safe area when you can't supervise to prevent access to inappropriate items that it may chew. Crates should only be used for short periods of time. Other than that, an exercise pen or blocked off hallway or room will do.
- Realistic Expectations – Long term confinement will cause boredom, stress and/or anxiety that can lead to inappropriate chewing and other behaviour problems. Keep the length of any necessary confinement short and provide a variety of safe and enticing chew options when you leave to keep stress to a minimum.
- Alternatives – Utilize reputable, experienced and positive dog walkers or dog daycare if your dog needs to spend too much time alone. If your dog is happy visiting a responsible family member or friend this provides another viable alternative to long-term confinement.
- Make your Dog Comfortable – Provide a comfortable bed (unless your dog destroys beds) and make your dog as comfortable as possible to prevent stress that can lead to inappropriate chewing.
- Remove Everything Unacceptable – Puppy proof your dog's confinement area by removing everything inappropriate that your dog may chew on. If the only options available for your dog to chew are acceptable chew toys, your dog will become fixated on appropriate items because you've eliminated all other choices.

Chewing

- Dog Repellant – Spray anything you feel your dog may chew on that cannot be removed with Bitter Apple dog repellant such as: baseboards, cupboards and furniture. Once you've sprayed these items put some of the repellant on your finger and offer it to your dog. Once your dog has tasted the repellant it should be repelled by anything with that taste or scent. Keep in mind that repellants do not work for every dog.
- Lots of Options – Leave a variety of enticing options out at all times so that if your dog gets bored with one item, it can move onto the next. If enough options are not available your dog will chew or dissect something else. If the only options available are the dogs' chew toys it will become fixated on those items.



- Hidden Gems – Hide stuffed toys and treats for your dog to find while you are away.
- Radio or Television – Leave a radio or television on to mimic real life sounds and cover outside noises to prevent stress that could lead to inappropriate chewing.
- Arrivals and Departures – Adjust your arrival and departure routine. If the time of your arrivals and departures are predictable and you change your schedule it can lead to stress resulting in unwanted chewing. Changing your schedule on a regular basis creates a more resilient dog that's less likely to become stressed when change occurs.
- Keep it Calm – Make no fuss when you leave and ignore your dog until its calm when you return home.
- Supervision – Supervise your dog at all times when it's not confined to a safe area until your dog proves to you over time that it will not chew inappropriate items.

Chewing

- Eliminate the Stress – If the chewing behaviour is caused by stress it's important to identify and eliminate the source of stress.
- Interrupt and Redirect – If you catch your dog chewing something inappropriate, trade it for something it can have. Whatever you do – don't punish your dog as this can lead to possessive aggression.
- Time Out – If your dog is relentlessly focusing it's chewing on an inappropriate object even when supervised and re-directed, a time out may be appropriate. (See *"Time Out"* handout)
- teach your Dog – Provide a toy box for your dog that contains a variety of chew options and toss in a few kibbles a few times a day. Your dog will begin checking its toy box on a regular basis to look for food. Make sure a few of the chew options smell and taste good. Take your dog to its toy box on a regular basis to get it excited about acceptable chew options.
- Frozen Meals – Feed your dog's meals in a frozen stuffed Kong or safe hollow bone. By doing this your dog's meals will become a valued and anticipated chewing event. (See *"Chew Options"* on page 4)
- Leave it – Teach a reliable "Leave it" cue to use when necessary. (See *"Leave it"* handout)
- Interrupt and Redirect – As long as your dog is not grabbing inappropriate items as an attention getting behaviour, replace an inappropriate chew item with an appropriate one and make sure everything else is kept up and out of reach.
- Chewing the Leash
 1. Offer a favourite toy or stick for your dog to carry on its walk.
 2. Spray your leash with Bitter Apple dog repellent.
 3. Use a chain leash, as they are not fun for your dog to chew.
- Don't Punish – Teach! – It's unfair to punish your dog for behaving like a dog. Instead of jeopardizing your dog's temperament and emotional well-being with punishment, teach it to chew appropriate items instead. Punishment will also cause stress that increases stress-relieving behaviours such as chewing.

Chewing

- Reward Good Behaviour – It's human nature to pay attention to behaviour we don't like and ignore behaviour we like. Because attention is one of the most potent rewards we can give our dogs we need to flip that concept and pay attention to behaviours we do like. Instead of ignoring your dog, give it attention and reward it for appropriate chewing.

Chew Options

- Thick and safe smoked bones
- Thick and safe frozen beef marrow bones
- Stuffed thick and safe hollow marrow bones
- Stuffed Kongs
- Treat balls

Smoked and cooked bones can splinter but raw bones do not. Supervision is recommended when feeding any type of bone. The safest bones are raw marrowbones that are equally thick at bone ends. When one end is wider than the other, the bone becomes thin at the wide end and can easily be snapped off and swallowed. Each bone must be large enough to prevent your dog from swallowing it whole. The hole in the center of the bone must be small enough to prevent the bone from becoming stuck on the dog's lower jaw.



Too much chewing on hard items such as bone can wear down or break a dog's teeth. For this reason I prefer to stuff and freeze my marrow bones causing my dogs to lick the center of the bone as opposed to chewing on the bone itself. Stuffed Kongs are another option. My dogs get the bone with meat on it and marrow inside as an occasional treat.



These are safe bones as they are thick on both ends



This bone is not safe as the bone itself is very thin

Chewing

Stuffing Options

Norma Jeanne's Bone/Kong Stuffing Recipe

Soak your dog's kibble in water until it turns to mush and mash it up. You can stuff a hollow bone or Kong with the mush and freeze it as is or you can add a combination of any of the following ingredients in small amounts;

- Fat free white yogurt
- Pieces of lean meat from last night's supper
- Pieces of your dog's favourite all natural cookies
- Pinch of minced garlic
- Teaspoon pumpkin puree
- Mashed beets (could stain carpets and/or furniture – serve outside or on a blanket)
- Pineapple
- Sardines
- Tablespoon salmon or tuna

Mix the ingredients, stuff the Kong/bones and freeze it.

Serve frozen



Chewing

Kelly Dearlove's Recipes

- 1: I use 3 medallions from Nature's variety frozen raw. Thaw them slightly, and stuff the Kong and freeze it.
2. Take some of your dog's kibble and soften it with boiling water- mash it up into a paste.

Add a little bit of garlic powder, and some plain natural yogurt and mix. Take a piece of cooked or raw meat and put it into the Kong, then start to layer the food mixture alternating with peanut butter, food mixture, cheese, ending with food mixture again. Pack it very firmly and freeze for at least 2 hours.

Both of these will give your dog about 45 minutes to 1 hour of constant licking and expelling energy!

Emily Ugarenko's Recipes

It almost goes hand in hand (or paw-in-paw if you will), you get a dog, you get a Kong toy. The Kong is that wonderful durable rubber toy that keeps your dog occupied for hours on end, provided you use it to your advantage.

In the beginning, you may have stuffed that Kong with kibble, cheese, training treats, bits and pieces of tasty leftovers from your meals, and boy was Fido happy. These days the novelty may have worn off (for both of you) as the Kong rarely sees more than a handful of kibble and a dollop of peanut butter (or heaven forbid that commercial peanut butter stuffing product that is absent of any form of peanut!)...booooring.

Perfect timing for this, a secret recipe book if you will, of delightful Kong Stuffings! As always, use this as a guide to your own creativity, and your pooches preferences. Organic and additive free foods are always preferred.

Many of these recipes are a bit messy to make and REALLY messy when consumed. Freezing your Kong creation for a few hours helps, but I strongly suggest letting your pooch consume these outside, or on the kitchen floor, somewhere it is easy to clean up.

I like to start every Kong with a handful or so of regular kibble. This helps to plug the end so no liquid leaks out during preparation. Please note, quantities will vary depending upon the size of your Kong (and dog), create layers of ingredients to make every lick a new adventure.

Chewing

1. Peanut Buster Parfait

Peanut butter (crunchy or smooth)
Chopped unsalted peanuts
1 banana (mashed or banana baby food)
Raw honey
Carob chips (as an extra treat – just a few)

2. Berry Good Smoothee

Plain yogurt
Frozen blueberries
Dried cranberries (please do not use “Craisins”)
Optional: flax seed or rolled oats

3. Cheese Please

Grated cheddar, plain cream cheese, grated mozzarella cheese or substitute.
Steer clear of overly salty cheeses like Feta. *(Layer this with kibble or tiny training treats, and either freeze OR microwave for 1 minute on 50% power to melt before serving (please test temperature by sticking your finger into the ooey gooey goodness before giving it to Fido!))*

4. Weimer-burger

Cooked ground beef (or leftovers, just hold the taco seasoning please),
grated cheese
Chopped carrots or carrot baby food

5. German Shepherds Pie

Mashed potatoes (hold the seasoning please), chopped carrots or carrot baby food
Frozen or cooked peas (or pea baby food), Parmesan cheese

6. Sweet Potato Pie

Cooked/mashed sweet potatoes (or sweet potato baby food)
Chopped carrots (or carrot baby food)
Graham cracker crumbs (just a handful)
Cream cheese (for topping as your last “layer”)

References

Jean Donaldson, The Culture Clash 1996
Dr. Ian Dunbar, Seminar notes Puppy Training 1990