

Chewing and Destructive Behavior in Dogs

Dogs don't chew out of anger or spite. They chew because they are dogs and dogs have a natural, instinctual desire to chew. It helps alleviate discomfort in teething puppies, and relieves stress and boredom in dogs of all ages. Above all other reasons, it's enjoyable. Chewing feels good to them but it's not the chewing itself that gets dogs into trouble; it is *what* they chew that can strain your relationship.

Inappropriate chew toys

- An old shoe, sock or any other article of clothing. While dogs can be trained to discriminate between their toys and items that are off limits, it's an extra step in training and it may be easier to allow them strictly dog toys.
- A consumable item such as a dog biscuit or rawhide. An item ingested within 5-10 minutes is **not** a chew toy.

Appropriate chew toys

- A toy that can be chewed on until the dog is exhausted; often made of hard rubber or plastic.
- A toy more interesting and better tasting than furniture or your personal belongings.
- Toys such as Kongs™ or hollow, sterilized beef bones. These items can be stuffed with dog treats, peanut butter, cheese spread, canned food, or anything else the dog finds extremely appealing and that will take some time to lick out.
- Buster cubes or activity balls are hard plastic toys that can be filled with dry kibble or dry food treats. As the dog works the cube or ball (pushes it with his nose), the food is randomly dispersed from the toy. This exercises the dog's mind and his muscles.

If you are creative with your dog's toys, providing variety and interest, you will have a dog that is addicted to his toys in no time. Until you have trained your dog to know what is appropriate to chew on, he needs to be supervised so he doesn't go in search of **your** toys or **your** furniture.

When you cannot be with your dog in the house, keep him confined with only his toys within reach (See MHS handout "*Crate Training Your Dog.*") Keep laundry and waste paper baskets behind closed doors and shoes in the closet. Re-direct any inappropriate chewing to the chew toys.

Always take time to praise your dog when he is chewing on appropriate items.

If you don't take the time initially to teach appropriate chewing habits and only reprimand inappropriate chewing, your dog will quickly learn to chew only when you are not present and he will choose his own object. Remember, dogs *need* to chew. It is best to teach him what is appropriate to chew otherwise he will find something else to chew when you aren't around.

Separation Anxiety

If your dog is chewing around door frames, window ledges, or tearing up carpeting or tile around exit routes in your home, he may be suffering from separation anxiety. If this occurs or if he is hurting himself (i.e. raw nose, raw pads of feet, broken nails or teeth), please contact a qualified behavior consultant.

For more information about pet behavior and training, please **visit our website at michiganhumane.org**.