

# Upper Valley Dog Behavior Consulting and Training

## CHEWING

Chewing is a normal canine behavior. Regular chewing is essential to maintaining the health of your dog's teeth, jaws and gums. Puppies especially have a strong urge to chew, both to relieve the irritation and inflammation of teething and also to investigate their surroundings. The owners must communicate to their dog that they do not want them to stop chewing - they simply want them to learn what objects are appropriate for chewing. Therefore we must redirect the dog's chewing activities to those objects.

If people look at the situation from a dog's point of view, we realize that there are limited things a dog can do to entertain itself. They can chew, dig and bark. If the dog is left alone for long periods of time, he is likely to become bored and lonely. Puppies especially need a high level of stimulation to keep them amused.

**Chewtoys should be indestructible and non-consumable. Consumption of nonfood items is dangerous for your dog's health.**



Kongs and long bones are by far the best chew toys. They are hollow and may easily be stuffed with goodies to heighten your dog's interest and entice it to chew them exclusively.

To prevent your dog from overeating, ensure the "treats" are actually part of your dog's daily diet. Use a little peanut butter or cream cheese to stick a piece of freeze-dried liver inside the Kong or bone before filling it with kibble and different shaped biscuits. Some treats fall out easily to reinforce your dog as soon as he shows interest, whereas other treats only fall out after your dog has worked on it for awhile.

The piece of liver will be most difficult to get out. Your dog may smell the liver, see the liver, may be even taste the liver but it is hard to get to. So, your dog will continue gnawing at the chew toy until he falls asleep.

Whenever leaving your puppy alone at home, confine it to a crate with nothing else to chew on but half a dozen intelligently stuffed chewtoys.

Once your dog has developed an appropriate chewing habit, it will happily refrain from destroying carpets, curtains, couches, clothes, chair legs, computer disks, children's toys or electrical cords. He will be less likely to develop into a recreational barker or digger. Additionally, he will not become bored or anxious when left alone.

When you are home, periodically confine your dog to his bed or crate with a couple of stuffed chewtoys. If you make a habit of doing this from the very first day your impressionable puppy comes home, your puppy will soon develop a good chewtoy habit.

**Good habits are just as hard to break as bad ones.**

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