

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

PET BEHAVIOR AND TRAINING SERVICES, INC.

DESTRUCTIVE CHEWING IN PUPPIES AND DOGS

Written by Pet Behavior and Training Services, Inc. for use by the Montgomery County Animal Shelter

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every dog came into this world knowing which items were dog chew toys and which items belong to their human family? Unfortunately, they are not born with this knowledge, but they can be taught. Teaching them what to chew is much more effective than attempting to punish them for making a wrong choice.

STRATEGIES FOR DESTRUCTIVE CHEWING

Limit Opportunity

Preventing damage is done by limiting the puppy's or dog's freedom. Do not allow him free run of the house. Confine in one or two rooms where the family spends most of their time, Make sure a responsible family member is supervising the dog. Damage control and proper learning means dog-proofing that area. Teach the kids to pick up their toys and your husband to pick up his socks. If the dog is chewing the fringe on the oriental carpet, roll it up and put it away until the dog understands what he can chew. Another tactic would be to spray the fringe with something such as Bitter Apple spray.

Whenever you cannot supervise or must be away from the house, put the dog in his crate. Reward him for going in to the crate with praise and give him a special chew toy. (See our handout on Crate Training if your dog is not already accustomed to and comfortable in a crate.)

Eliminate Reasons

- * Help establish a chewing preference by providing attractive chew toys. Some of the best chew toys are hollow bones and Kong toys. Hollow bones are made from real cow bones and are available in many varieties—smoked, sterilized and pre-stuffed. The wonderful thing about these toys is that they are relatively indestructible. You can rub a little cheese or peanut butter in the ends of the holes several times a day. If you want the dog to work longer and harder you can stuff the bones or Kong with canned dog food, cream cheese, cheese-whiz or commercial dog treats.

- * Make these toys the focus of fetch and play sessions with you and your dog. Soon they will become an appealing object for chewing.
- * If the puppy or dog does grab something he shouldn't have, do not make the multiple mistakes of chasing him or trying to pull the object out of his mouth. Chasing him is a great game for the dog, so you are just rewarding the behavior—exactly what you don't want to do. So is trying to pull something out of his mouth. Before he has a forbidden object in his mouth teach him to come, sit and drop-it for a treat. (See section on Teaching Simple Obedience Skills.)
- * Give a teething puppy some ice cubes or a sterilized bone that has been kept in the freezer with a little peanut butter or cheese in the holes. You can fix several up ahead of time and keep them in a plastic bag in the freezer.
- * Dogs that do not get enough exercise become bored or frustrated. This can lead to destructive chewing. Many problem behaviors can be improved by increasing the dogs exercise. Just having a fenced yard is not enough. Most dogs don't exercise on their own. Games of fetch are a good way for the dog to burn off excess energy. Walks are good for both you and the dog. If you have a friend with a compatible dog, get them together for a little fun. Visit a dog park or join an obedience class.
- * Puppies need short, frequent bursts of exercise. Never force a dog to exercise longer than they wish and be careful in the heat. Dogs do not cool off as efficiently as we do.

Summary

- * If you see the dog chewing a forbidden object, calmly and simply say “no”, hand him his special toy, praise him for taking and chewing it.
- * Provide attractive and interesting chew toys, rotate several every few days to keep the interesting.
- * Help the dog make right choices. Dog proof his special area. Crate when you cannot supervise.
- * Play games with him, incorporating the toys.
- * Provide exercise and other interesting things to do.
- * **See section on Separation Anxiety if you feel your dog may be chewing due to anxiety about being left alone.**

If you need further help or information, you may call us for an individual appointment at 937-293-5686. If you live outside the area, contact your veterinarian for a list of obedience classes or referral to a pet behavior specialist.

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