

# Dogs and Toys

All dogs especially puppies' love toys and it is essential to provide your dog with his own toys to play with. Pet shops have a massive selection of amazing weird and wonderful toys to fulfill every dogs (and owners) preference for different types of toys.

There is no doubt that most dogs whatever their age can be very vigorous chewers , so great care should be taken when choosing which toys to buy for your dog . Balls are great favourites and are available in many different sizes. A good choice is a ball made from durable rubber, some have a rope attached. Not such a good choice is a small ball that can be squeezed or a cheap tennis ball. These balls can squash up when chewed, get lodged in the dog's throat then expand back into shape which can cause the dog to choke. They can also be chewed into small pieces and swallowed. A ball that is too small for the size of the dog can become a choking hazard as it could slip to the back of the dog's throat. Hollow toys made for chewing or stuffing with food treats should be strong and have at least two holes in. If it has just a single opening there is a very real danger of the dog's tongue becoming trapped inside as the suction created by chewing cannot be freed because a vacuum develops. A second hole allows the air to be released as the dog chews preventing this from happening. Soft toys come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and are irresistible to dogs but most of these when given to the dog to play with require constant supervision as many are just not chew proof and a dog, even a puppy can very quickly rip them apart and may swallow pieces and even eat the stuffing. Many squeaky toys are not very strong and can very soon have the squeak removed by the dogs constant chewing to make them squeak, this small part is easily swallowed along with any chewed off pieces.

Rawhide chews are available in all sorts of shapes and sizes but whatever their size with the dogs continual chewing they can quickly be reduced to a soft mush. Large pieces can be bitten off swallowed and become stuck at the back of the dogs throat. Dogs have been known to choke on Rawhide chews.

It is not just brought toys that may have disastrous consequences for the dog.

Dogs often find, pickup and chew sticks, they also love them thrown for them, but they should not be encouraged to play with them. Sticks and twigs big or small can break and splinter in the dogs mouth causing nasty infections or can be swallowed resulting in serious injuries. If a stick is thrown and it bounces back or one end gets stuck upright in the ground the dog chasing after the stick can run into it causing injuries to its mouth, eyes or face. If the dog is running fast it can even impale itself on a stick. The good news is that these mishaps can be avoided. Luckily there are reputable dog toy companies which provide guidance recommending suitable toys depending on the dog's age, size and chewing intensity and strength. This includes safer

squeaky toys, strong rubber toys, tuggers made from strong knotted rope, well made interactive toys which can be filled with food , soft toys made from tuff material which can withstand a lot of chewing, alternative to the rawhide chews made from vegetable and chicken etc, alternative to a stick made from flexible rubber with rounded ends called a “Safe Stick”.

There is now a good choice available of more durable safer toys and chews for dogs but no toy is indestructible from the considerable pressure of a committed chewers jaws. So supervise your dog with even the most robust toys until you are sure that it will be safe to leave him alone with them. Inspect toys regularly to make sure they are still in good condition and not about to become a risk to your dog’s health.

Gill Ward M.I.A.C.E