

## Biting Down on Chewing

©2000 Canine College West

### Chewing/Nipping/Mouthing:

Dogs chew for many reasons – the most common is when they are “teething”. Puppies go through three teething stages during their developmental stages:

#### **STAGE 1: 3 weeks old to 6 weeks old**

It is this stage where your puppy will cut his “milk teeth” – these are the sharp little teeth that feel like rows of needles ripping into your flesh. The good news is that your puppy will lose ALL of these teeth as they mature.

#### **STAGE 2: 3 months to 5 months old**

Your puppy has now entered their second stage of teething – they are losing their milk teeth and cutting their adult teeth. These teeth are wider and not as sharp as the milk teeth. Chewing and mouthing on all objects – much like a teething baby, characterize this stage. You may see spots of blood on chew toys and objects – there is nothing to worry about – it just means another tooth is gone. You may or may not find any teeth that your puppy has lost.

#### **STAGE 3: 7 months to 1 year**

This is the last and perhaps the most difficult of the teething stages. Your puppy now has all their adult teeth, but as the teeth are permanently setting into the jaw they cause pain and discomfort for your pooch. Now, instead of chewing *on* things, they're chewing *through* them!

In all teething stages, it is important to fixate your dog on appropriate chew toys. There is a difference between “chew toys” and “play toys.” – Chew toys are edible, play toys are not.

Dogs generally fall into two categories of chewers - aggressive and non-aggressive. An aggressive chewer is any dog that chews with such gusto, that you hear cracking sounds as he breaks the object he's chewing on. He also is quick to try and swallow all or part of the chewing object. Aggressive chewers tend to be heavily muscled dogs like Rottweilers, Mastiffs and Pit Bulls.

Non-aggressive chewers gnaw at things much more gently. Instead of cracking off chunks of the chew toy, they will mouth and gnaw at it only making small indentations. The same bone an aggressive chewer may devour in a few hours will last a non-aggressive chewer days or weeks.

Most dogs are non-aggressive chewers. Most dogs chew because they are teething. Giving your dog proper chew toys, along with discouraging improper chewing, will guide your dog to good behavior.

Dogs not only vary in their chewing styles (aggressive or non-aggressive), they vary in the amount and reason they chew. A dog may be a non-aggressive chewer, but needs to chew and mouth things all the time. While another dog may not need to chew very much at all but will chew a Knuckle Bone very aggressively if he has access to one. The

reasons some dogs need to chew more than others are as different as the dogs themselves. While some breeds like Labradors are naturally more mouthy and seem to really enjoy chewing, individual dogs may need to chew more because of teething, stress, lack of exercise, dietary deficiencies, frustration or medical problems.

Whatever the reason or type of chewing the dog engages in, you must first take time to "fixate" the dog on the proper chew toys. To "fixate" a dog on the proper chew toys, you should play with the toys as you are interacting with your dog. You must show him that the way to get your attention is through the chew toys. Until the dog is properly fixated, you should not play with the dog unless the chew toy is part of the play. In addition, anytime the dog is seen chewing on the chew toy, he should be praised.

Proper chew toys include: (**Caution**-"aggressive" chewers (pit bulls, Rottweilers) should only have "soft" chewies, indicated with a \*\*).

- Gummabones. They can be made more appetizing by soaking them regularly in beef or chicken broth or coating them with peanut butter or liver.\*\*
- Black or red Kongs. The black Kong is harder than the red Kong. There are some aggressive chewers that can chew up and eat a red Kong, so they should only be given a black Kong. Great to stuff with soft food treats.\*\*
- Rhino toys. Basically, they are Kongs with bumps all over.\*\*
- Tire Biters – They are chew toys that look like little tire – made of rubber and some have a rope to tug and toss.\*\*
- Booda Bimples or Velvets. Caution: a large dog may break a Booda into chunks and attempt to swallow it. The edges of these large chunks can be very sharp so be aware.
- Bacon, Cheese, Carrot or "Meat" Bones. (Usually made by Nylabone)
- Greenies: Never more than one a day
- Sterilized knucklebones. Watch the dog closely. Some dogs will ingest too much bone material and may throw up ground up bone or produce an extremely hard, calcified stool the following day.
- Sterilized marrowbones. The hollow middle may be stuffed with soft food treats.
- Cow hooves. These are usually best given to dogs outside since they produce a barnyard odor when the dog chews. Cow hooves are a favorite chew toy of many non-aggressive chewers. They can last quite a long time and are inexpensive.

**Do not allow the dog access to more than 3 – 5 toys at any one time, or they may lose the ability to tell the difference and think everything is a toy. Do not give the dog any unacceptable items to chew on or play with, for example**

Improper chew toys include:

- Old shoes or clothing.
- Wood.
- Towels

- Plastic water bottles.
- Rawhide. Use only rawhide produced in the U.S. Rawhide from other countries may have pesticides or other toxins. Also, rawhide in general can be dangerous, the dog can gnaw off a big chunk and attempt to swallow it.
- Pigs ears – mostly fat and pork, they carry salmonella

Use **Bitter Apple** chew deterrent on any items the dog is chewing on that is unacceptable, including humans and clothes. Give the puppy one squirt directly into his mouth so he realizes how horrible it is. You only have to spray it in his mouth once. Then spray items you do not want him to chew every time prior to bringing him around them. Be sure to re-spray those objects at least once a day until he is trained to not touch those forbidden items. It is easiest to work on one area of the house at a time. Pre-treat each room as the puppy earns more freedom in the house. For example: block off the kitchen and spray anything the puppy may be interested in chewing. Telephone cords, wires, table legs, edges of throw rugs, hanging dishtowels etc. Make sure there are several of his appropriate chew toys in the room. If the puppy starts to put his mouth on something he shouldn't, say "uh-uh" in a loud voice. Then put one of the dog's toys in their mouth and praise and pet. Do this exercise in every room until he avoids the forbidden items without chewing.

Canine College West  
"Turning Pests into Pets"  
(775) 351-4854  
[www.k9west.net](http://www.k9west.net)