



We continually update our skills and knowledge so that we stay current with the best practices that can help you and your dog.

cheerfuldogs chronicles

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Issue 31

Living with Dogs: Play It Safe

It can't be said often enough: Toys are great – as training rewards, for dog-dog play, for dog-human play — and yes, as mental stimulation when Fido is home alone. Dogs left in a moonscape environment get bored, and idle minds often turn to mischief. Toys can make all the difference. However, not all toys are created equal, so choose carefully which ones you leave your dog unsupervised with. Here are some guidelines:

Supervise first encounters. Every time your dog plays with or chews on something new, it should happen under your watchful eye. Make sure your dog plays with the toy appropriately — that is, uses it the way it's meant to be used. Gnawing on (rather than swallowing) a chew, for instance, or rolling a treat ball rather than trying to crack it open with his teeth.



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Choose chews and toys carefully. Look for durable, non-toxic materials (some rawhides have been preserved with arsenic, for example). And always buy toys created for dogs, not plastic things from the bargain bin at the supermarket. Treat balls should have two openings, not one, to prevent a vacuum effect that can cause your dog's tongue to get stuck.

Dog quotes

“Scratch a dog and you'll find a permanent job.” – Franklin Jones

cont.

.... Play it safe

Never leave your dog alone with... 1. A rawhide or other edible chews. You need to be around to take the chew away before it's small enough for your dog to swallow and potentially choke on. 2. Anything your dog hasn't played with before. 3. Anything with parts small enough to swallow, such as squeakers.

Know your dog. Some dogs play gently with all toys and never break or tear anything. Others are on a mission to take things apart at the seams — nothing gives them greater pleasure. The goal is to find toys that keep your dog happy and constructively occupied during alone time via mental stimulation and food-and-fun delivery. If in doubt about what's safe to give your dog, always consult your veterinarian or dog trainer.



Dogs In Action: Conservation Dogs

Among the many important jobs held by dogs today, conservation work is a small but crucial niche. Conservation dogs are trained to find wildlife and plant samples using modified search & rescue and narcotic techniques. The perfect dog for the job is high energy with a compulsive play drive and toy focus — the more, the better. Many conservation dogs are shelter rescues, given up by families who couldn't cope with an always-on dog. This drive is necessary both for the high-level training and for working in the field alongside biologists and wildlife researchers roughly 300 days out of the year.

One primary job function of conservation dogs is finding wildlife scat and hair. To a biologist, such samples are treasure troves of information, revealing — through DNA analyses — a species' presence, population size, reproductive status, and food habits. Other vital jobs include searching out endangered species for monitoring, such as the Tiger Quoll in Australia, and kiwi in New Zealand; or invasive species (such as the yellow star thistle, a weed that overruns native plants in North America and can kill horses).



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