



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

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ADVICE SHEET 12

Chewing And How to Control it



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Introduction

Adolescent chewing (or exploratory chewing as it is also known) commonly occurs in dogs between puppyhood and adulthood at seven to 12 months of age, and can last for up to six months. It is different from puppy teething since it happens after all the needle-like puppy teeth have fallen out.



Adolescent dogs often have an uncontrollable urge to chew, which could be because of discomfort in the gums as their adult teeth are settling into the jawbone.

Why do dogs chew?

Adolescent chewing also occurs as young dogs attempt to explore their environment and discover new things.

Reasons include the following:

Boredom - dogs left alone for long periods or not getting enough mental and physical stimulation are likely to become bored. Working breeds have naturally high activity levels and become easily bored in the wrong home. This can lead to destructive behaviour.

Puppy teething - this occurs between three and seven months of age when puppies have an uncontrollable urge to chew to relieve some of the discomfort in their gums. Chewing also facilitates the removal of puppy teeth and the eruption of the adult set.

Attention seeking - if your dog learns that chewing something forbidden (such as the TV remote) makes you get up and chase round the room, the animal quickly learns that this is a great way to get attention.

An unbalanced diet - for example, if not getting enough calcium your dog may try to compensate by chewing stones or plaster. All dogs should be fed according to their age, weight, health status and the amount of exercise they receive. Consult your vet for advice on the best diet for your dog.

Distress at being left alone - some dogs cannot cope with being separated from their owners and are destructive when left. (See Advice Sheet 6: Home Alone).

What can be done about chewing?

- Supply your dog with items that are safe and tough enough to survive being chewed - this means they should not splinter, or break into small or harmful pieces that can be swallowed

- Make sure the dog does not have access to places where there are valuable or dangerous items if you are not there to supervise
- Regularly exercise your dog - especially away from home, at least once a day (ie do not just exercise your dog in the garden)
- Visit different environments when you walk your dog (such as pavements, fields, woods, parks and beaches). Care must be taken with puppies until they are fully protected by vaccination.
- Teach your dog what is acceptable and unacceptable to chew
- Try to play with your dog at least three times a day, for at least five minutes each time. Short, frequent play sessions are the best.

Toys and chews are different

Generally, toys and chews should not be confused. Toys are usually designed to be thrown, chased, squeaked, and tugged during play. Most are not designed to be chewed. Some exceptions are Kongs and activity balls which can be referred to as "chew toys" (see later).