

UNSAFE TOYS – WATCH YOUR RESCUE DOGS TOY SELECTION!

You and your dog may have very different views on what makes an excellent dog toy. Many commonly used dog toys can be quite dangerous, whether they are homemade, purchased or "found" (by your dog, usually without your knowledge). Often, the objects that dogs find most attractive are the very items that can most easily cause harm. In addition, many toys sold in pet shops and supermarkets feature small parts and decorations that fall off or can be chewed off. Such toys can choke your dog, so beware as you make your purchases, and be sure to replace toys immediately if they have parts that appear to be loosening or wearing out.

Here are details on some specific popular dog toys:

- **Balls**

Balls can be deadly if they are too small for the dog that is playing with them. A ball that your dog has been enthusiastically slobbering all over while he is playing with you can become very slimy and if the ball is too small, it can slip down your dog's throat and cause her to choke. Tennis balls are among the safest balls for your dog to play, because their size and fuzzy sides make them unlikely to be a choking hazard for any dog except the very largest breeds. Balls with slippery outer coatings, however, such as racquet balls or golf balls, can be an especially potent choking hazard. Golf balls pose an additional danger because the liquid inside is often toxic; your dog can become very sick if she manages to pierce the outer coating with her teeth.

- **Bones**

Never give your dog bones from your kitchen. In cartoons the dogs are always gnawing on a huge bone, but in reality these can splinter and choke your pet, or cut the inside of her mouth and throat. You can boil household bones until they are soft to make great treats for your pet, or buy a natural bone that is specially treated to be safe for your dog.

- **Stuffed Toys**

If your dog likes to rip and tear, stuffed toys can be dangerous, especially if the toy has button eyes or other small parts that can come off, because your dog can swallow these and choke on them. Also, even if the toy is labeled safe for children (and therefore for pets) the stuffing inside can be another choking hazard and possible intestinal problem if your dog swallows the cotton stuffing.

- **Tug Toys**

These are fine to use if your dog is gentle, but if she likes to challenge you it is best not to use these toys to play with her. The problem with these toys is one of mental consequences rather than physical danger. Tug toys tend to make dogs more aggressive and cause problems when a dog is a little rebellious because it shows her how she can be 'stronger' than you are. This can later lead to problems with controlling your dog, if she doesn't respect your authority as a 'pack leader' and refuses to respond your command, such as one to stay out of the path of an oncoming car.

- **Rawhide Chews**

While your dog loves to chew this stuff, it may not be good for her health. Depending on the quality of the rawhide and your dog's enthusiasm, larger pieces can break off and be swallowed, getting stuck in the intestines and causing blockages. In addition, if the rest of the rawhide chew grows soft and slick, the solid knot can become a choking hazard. Rawhide that is not made in North America can also contain chemical residues that can be harmful to your dog's health. If your dog loves rawhide too much to give it up, buy her chew "chips" or compressed rawhide treats to avoid pieces that can be broken off, and make sure the chews you buy are made locally. At a very minimum, ensure that you purchase chews that are sized appropriately for your pet.

When providing toys for your dog:

- Purchase only pet-safe or child-safe toys. Ensure that the label is clearly marked with those designations and visually inspect the toy for small parts that could pose a choking hazard. Be certain that all toys are sturdy and securely sewn together, and replace any toys with parts that look loose or damaged.
- Avoid toys that have ribbons, feathers, strings, eyes or other small parts that could fall off, be removed, chewed, and/or eaten.
- Do not allow the dog to play with any object that could easily be swallowed.

- Use nothing smaller than a ping-pong ball as a dog toy to avoid the possibility of her choking on it.
- Avoid toys with sharp parts or corners.
- Consider soft, stuffed toys, which should be machine washable. Check labels for child safety; a stuffed toy which is labeled as safe for children under three years old cannot contain dangerous fillings.
- If you sew, knit, or do any kind of needlework or crafts, keep materials completely hidden in a hamper or sewing box.