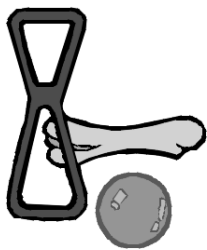




The Dog That Chews When Left Alone

Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs. They use their mouths to explore the environment in the same way that humans use their hands as investigative tools. Irrksome and sometimes expensive destructive chewing usually takes place when the owner is not with the dog. Therefore, correction when the dog starts or is in the act is impossible. The chewing can then become a compulsive behavior when the dog is lonely, bored, stressed or anxious.

THE LONELY DOG is one that is left alone for long periods of time in an unstimulating environment. These dogs chew out of boredom. To remedy the situation several things are in order. First make sure your dog is well exercised. An aerobic work-out is required for older puppies and adolescents. Second, provide your dog with a place that he can have all to himself. Dogs possess a denning instinct; let it work for you. The best way to confine a dog is with a kennel crate. A small bathroom or a kitchen area may do, if the dog is adverse to crating. However, there are many chewable objects in these rooms including flooring and cabinetry.



Confine the chewing dog in his crate whenever you are unable to supervise his activity. Leave him with a couple of acceptable chewies. **ACCEPTABLE CHEWIES** are toys that are not easily consumed, ones that may change their form as the dog gnaws at them. Nylabones, beef marrow bones, large rawhide knots all become more interesting to the dog as he works on them; the chewing action creates all sorts of lumps and depressions that keep most canines enraptured for hours. Kong™ toys can be stuffed with a variety of goodies including some of the dog's breakfast, challenging him to work for his meal. Old shoes, towels, scrap wood, or phonebooks are not acceptable chew toys. Dogs cannot differentiate between old shoes and new shoes, or scrap wood from kitchen cabinetry. Don't confuse your dog by giving him anything that may be mistaken for a forbidden object.

When you are ready to leave the house, put the dog in his confinement area with a couple of chewies and go. No long, sloppy goodbyes, no pleading or threatening gestures, just a cheery "see you later" or a matter-of-fact "be good," that's all.

For the first two weeks the dog cannot be allowed any unsupervised time. Put him in his crate each and every time that he is left alone. Do not give him an opportunity to chew a forbidden object without feedback.

Starting with the third week, put the dog in his crate with the door open and leave for about 10-20 minutes. If you return home to any destruction your dog is probably not bored and lonely, but rather is anxious about being separated from you.

THE ANXIOUS DOG is one who suffers from feelings of social isolation. Dogs are pack animals and many do not take it very well when they are left on their own to "defend their territory." There is safety in numbers for pack oriented animals, and what the anxious dog needs is a secure and comfortable place to stay when he is left behind.



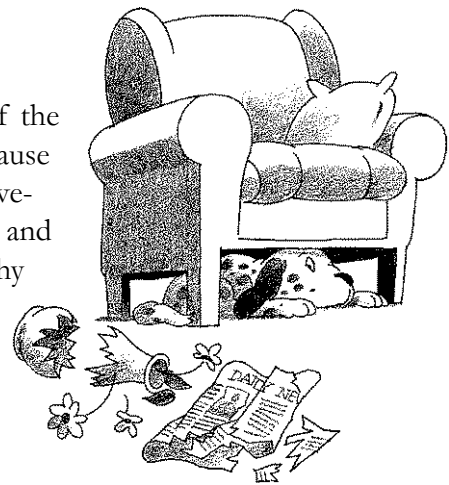
Once again, a kennel crate may be the tool of choice. Introduce the dog to the crate in a positive manner. Never use the crate for punishment. This is your dog's den — he should be happy and secure when he's inside. As with the lonely dog, there should be no long, emotional goodbyes. However, before you leave his chew toy with him in his crate, rub the toy between your palms. This action imparts your scent to the toy and tends to focus the dog on this object rather than something else.

Excellent results have been obtained by using the following exercise to re-orient the dog's chewing habits. Take away all of the dog's former chewies, and replace them with a meat-scented nylon bone (Nylabone™ is one such toy). Make this bone the focus of a fetch and play session at least twice a day. The combination of the owner's scent with the meat scent makes it an appealing object on which to chew. Since the toy bone has now become the focus of intense interaction between the dog and the owner, the vast majority of dogs will aim their chewing at it.

As with the lonely dog, the anxious dog should be confined to his crate for the first two weeks when home alone. Beginning with the third week, leave the dog in his crate with the door open for a period of time not to exceed 20 minutes. If you return home to any signs of destruction, shorten the length of time that you are gone until you arrive at a time span that is successful. From that point on, SLOWLY increase the length of time that you are gone until you have reached your goal. If at any time, you come home to destruction, go backward in time at least two steps and maintain that time frame for at least a week; then proceed with the schedule as planned.

If you find your dog is bloodying his paws or otherwise hurting himself trying to escape the crate, another course of action needs to be taken. For cases of severe separation anxiety, an applied animal behavior or other behavior consultant should be employed. This serious problem will need an individualized behavior modification program and possibly drug therapy to be resolved.

Every new puppy or dog owner should expect a certain amount of destruction from curiosity-based or tension-relieving oral tendencies of the pet. The solution to the problem lies in removing the environmental cause and guiding the dog towards the appropriate objects to chew. The above-mentioned preventive and corrective approaches will help to minimize and ultimately solve the problem while allowing the dog to develop a healthy relationship with you.



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