**Dogs Need to Chew**

Chewing is a natural behavior all dogs need to express. But every dog is different and a treat or toy that’s good for one dog to chew may be dangerous for another.

**Watch a dog or puppy the first time she gets anything new to chew.** If she can tear the chew up, crack off chunks or seems to be going through it too fast, take it away from her. This is an indication that this chew may not be right for her. If, however, she gnaws the ends of the chew, gradually wearing it down, the chew may be a good match.  **Match the size of the treat to the size of a dog’s mouth, teeth and throat.** A dog needs to be able to get his teeth around the chew, carry it and hold it between his paws. Large dogs need chews that are big enough for them to enjoy for a while without the risk of swallowing them whole. In general, the bigger the treat the better.
 **Dogs come in all sizes, but when it comes to chewing behaviors, size can be deceiving.** While little dogs are often more ferocious chewers than large dogs, even a large dog that chews softly can get into trouble with a chew that’s too small. When a dog wears down her chew to a size that she could accidentally swallow, replace it.
 **Match the hardness of the chew with the strength of the dog’s jaws and the force with which he prefers to chew.** If a dog always chews aggressively, look for chews meant to be easily digested, or for hard chews that won’t splinter, fracture or tear.

Besides being fun, chewing helps puppies and dogs keep their teeth and gums healthy. Safe chews and toys can keep plaque from building up on the teeth and prevent bad breath. Chewing also alleviates boredom, loneliness and stress, and regular access to chew toys and treats can keep dogs from destroying shoes, furniture and other inappropriate objects.