

Puppy Destructive Behavior

BEHAVIOR SERIES



Although often considered insignificant or even “cute” as a puppy, destructive behaviors can escalate in severity and become dangerous as a puppy grows.

Play Biting

- Play mouthing/biting on human flesh should not be encouraged; use toys, not hands or feet, to play with your puppy
- Bites that cause pain or injury are never acceptable behavior, even when playing
- If a puppy starts to mouth a person, substitute a toy into his/her mouth and reward chewing on toy
- Provide your puppy with plenty of exercise e.g. walking, tossing ball (fetching games)
- If a puppy starts to bite human flesh, cease all interactions with your puppy, turning away or even leaving the area
- Don't hit your puppy, grab his muzzle or engage in any other physical interactive punishments as they may injure your puppy or cause an escalation in aggression

Digging

Digging can either be a normal behavior or a clinical sign of a behavioral disorder. Information about where and when a dog digs can provide insight into the cause of the digging. Some reasons for digging and appropriate interventions are listed below:

| Reason for Digging: | Intervention: |
|---|---|
| Exploration/Play/Boredom | Provide other exercise and environmental enrichment (e.g. walks, social play, toys); consider providing a designated dig area for your dog- loosen the soil and bury favored toys to encourage digging in the designated spot |
| Hunting subterranean dwelling prey (e.g. moles) | Remove prey from environment and/or restrict dogs access to areas where prey burrow |
| Escape | May be part of normal play/exploration or may be associated with a behavioral disorder - consult with your Banfield medical team |
| Regulation of body temperature (e.g. digs a hole in dirt to rest in it and stay cool) | Provide alternative cool place for your dog to rest |
| Anxiety Related Disorder (e.g. Separation Anxiety, Noise Phobia) | Consult with your Banfield medical team |

Chewing

Chewing is a normal form of exploration and play for dogs, especially puppies. However, destructive chewing can also be a clinical sign of a behavioral disorder, so any severe or persistent chewing should be brought to the attention of your veterinarian. Puppies are not born knowing what an appropriate chew item is, they must be taught. The following are some tips to control destructive chewing in your puppy:

- Puppy proof your house, removing/temporarily storing household items that your puppy is likely to target
 - If you cannot remove an inappropriate chew target from the environment (e.g. furniture) you can try to discourage chewing by applying a commercially available repellent spray on the chew target
- Provide your puppy with plenty of exercise
- Provide acceptable objects for your puppy to chew, especially during the teething period (3-6 months of age)
- Supervise your puppy closely and try to anticipate inappropriate chewing and redirect onto an acceptable item
- When supervision of your puppy is not possible, keep them confined in a secure and safe area (e.g. crate or small puppy proofed room) away from any inappropriate items
- If you catch your puppy in the act of chewing on an unacceptable object try to substitute an acceptable chew toy into his/her mouth
- Do not hit or physically punish your puppy for chewing, this may injure your puppy or create fear/defensive aggression



For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

