
Enrichment Feeding for dogs

Food, food, glorious food. We all need it survive. Enrichment feeding for your dogs means adding something to their day which makes the act of feeding your dog more meaningful and more rewarding. All animals have innate tendencies to hunt and scavenge for their food. Humans do to some degree though we tend to confine out hunting behaviours to the supermarket these days. Wild animals can spend up to 80% of their awake time searching for, acquiring and eating their food. This can fill the animal's day with mental and physical exercise for the single task of finding food to survive. Zoos around the world have seen the benefits of enrichment feeding captive animals by allowing them to utilise their natural instincts to hunt and scavenge for food to help prevent boredom related problem behaviours. This has become standard practice world-wide.



While our pets are highly adapted to living in our home environment, they still have many of the same instincts of their wild cousins. Dogs are natural hunters and scavengers, this is why some can't help but raid the bin! In the wild, time hunting will help maintain body condition while the mind stays active and burning energy in the process. When we feed our dogs in a food bowl, we take away the opportunity for physical and mental exercise. This often results in our dogs exhibiting problem behaviours we humans don't usually approve of such as barking, digging or chewing.



The solution to many of these problem behaviours can be as simple DITCHING THE FOOD BOWL!

Ditching the food bowl can be difficult for some dog owners so we suggest doing this for just one meal a day to start with. Then increase the meals as you become more used to enrichment feeding and learning new and creative ideas to feed your dog.

“The goal of enrichment feeding is to increase the amount of time it takes your dog to eat its food and in doing so encourage mental and physical activity.”

Using food as enrichment can help prevent problem behaviours in dogs such as separation anxiety, destructive behaviours and barking due to boredom.

There is no wrong way to enrichment feed though we recommend the dog's normal daily diet is used in the feeding process rather than just treats on top of their normal diet.

How to introduce enrichment feeding to your dogs

1. Start off by feeding just one meal per day as an enrichment meal. Then you can gradually build up the amount of feeds and time it takes your dog to eat his meal/s.
2. Find activities and routines which work for your own routine and that your pet enjoys.
3. Having several different activities and preparing them ahead of time makes it easier to keep to the enrichment feeding routine.
4. **Be creative and persistent if your dog does not eat what you have prepared you have probably made it a little too hard for his ability at this stage...make it easier next time and know that not everything you try will work for you and your dog.**



How to use KONG toys in your enrichment feeding program

KONGS are uniquely shaped, durable rubber dog toys with a hollow centre which can be filled with food or treats. They have been recommended by vets, dog trainers and behaviourists all over the world for over 30 years to help manage problem behaviours in dogs. KONG's ARE FUN, TOUGH and BEST WHEN STUFFED!



Firstly select KONGs suitable to your dog from the wide range of varieties available.

Puppy – the pink or blue KONG Puppy is designed for puppies up to 9 months of age. It is a little softer for delicate puppy mouths to enjoy.

Classic – The Red Classic KONG is the original KONG on the market. It is for average chewers who like to chew but don't generally destroying most items they play with.

Extreme – The Black Extreme KONG is designed for extreme or strong chewers who really get into the chewing game. The black KONG is thicker and about 30% stronger than the red Classic.

Senior – the purple Senior KONG are for dogs over 7 years of age who are average or gentle chewers.

All of KONG rubber products are made with high grade natural rubber. KONG do not use extenders like chalk in the rubber KONG.

“The key to teaching your dog to work for food in his KONG is to help the dog be successful early on in his play with a KONG. Make it easy to get food from the KONG, then as your dog gets better at the “game” start making it harder and harder by packing the food more and more tightly into the KONG. The level of difficulty should reflect the dog’s level of experience and skills.”

Here is a typical KONG recipe using your dogs daily diet.....remember the level of difficulty should reflect your dogs ability and experience using KONGs. If your dog leaves any food behind it usually means it was too hard, too soon;

- Moisten your dog's dry food with hot water and when cooled spoon into a KONG. For **experienced** KONG savvy dogs, try freezing this for an extra challenge!
- Cram a biscuit, a smear of peanut butter or Liverwurst paste into the small hole of the KONG. Smear a little honey, liverwurst paste or peanut butter around the inside. Fill up with dry food, then block the big hole with a larger biscuit/treat placed sideways or close of with more liverwurst paste. Dog's love liverwurst paste and it is reasonably priced at Aldi supermarkets!
- Spoon in tinned food and/or dry food into the KONG
- Mix natural yoghurt and dry food together and stuff into a KONG
- If you feed a raw food diet then you can still come up with ideas on stuffing it into KONG's .

Human food stuffing ideas;

- For something quick and easy but still challenging smear some peanut butter or liverwurst paste on a piece of bread. Fold up the bread and cram it into the KONG. Freeze and serve.
- Mash/puree any leftover vegies from dinner and mix with your dog daily intake and cram into a KONG. Mashed vegies help bring and hold all the dry food together. Serve frozen for an extra challenge!

Any food which is safe for dogs to eat can be stuffed into KONGs. Remember if you are giving your dog extra treats throughout a day either in KONG's, training rewards or any other reason you should reduce their daily intake by a similar amount to help prevent your pet becoming overweight.

KONGsicle If you want a long lasting cool game for your dog to play why not pack a couple of KONGs with yummy treats or your dogs daily diet. Then place them in an ice cream container filled with water and freeze!!!! Give it to your dog (outside) and they have an instant KONGsicle to keep them entertained for hours! It is simply dog food and water!

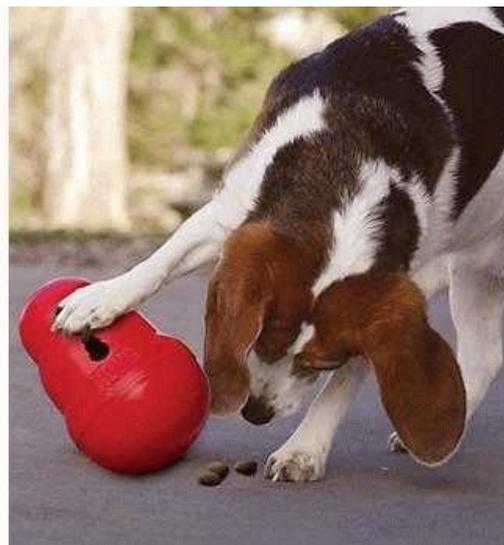


The KONG Wobbler

A quick and easy enrichment toy for your dog is the KONG Wobbler. Simply place your dogs dry food in the Wobbler and it becomes an interactive food bowl which the dog has to push around to dispense his food.

Wobbler Beginners

For some dogs new to the Wobbler feeding a meal or two out of an open Wobbler will help them learn the association between the food and the Wobbler. Then close it up with dry food and maybe some cooked chicken as an incentive to try a little harder. Once your dog knows the game and is working the Wobbler well you then don't need the chicken.



Wobbler Experts

How to make a KONG Wobbler more challenging for experienced Wobbler users...Place the food inside and add a crumpled up piece of paper. The paper will act like a maze and slow down the rate the food comes out of the Wobbler. Vary the size of the paper until you get a great, but achievable challenge for your dog. This is only for experience Wobbler users.

DITCH THE FOOD BOWL AND GIVE YOUR DOG A JOB!

Cat Wobbler

There is a cat Wobbler for young or active cats who would love a challenge and some fun around the house.

Youtube and Google “Enrichment feeding for dogs”

The internet has thousands of enrichment ideas for our dog, so do research and find new and inventive ways your dog can spend his time eating his daily diet.

What do I do when I have more than one dog in the house?

For multi-dog households it really depends on if the dogs can eat in the presence of each other. Generally speaking dogs will only guard something of value to them so in other words something rare that is only given out on special occasions. If something is given out in plentiful supply then most dogs won't feel the need to guard it. For example if you have two dogs place out 6 items (KONGs, bone, ice blocks etc) so there is plentiful supply and most dogs won't be able to guard 6 things.

In some cases it may be better to separate the dogs as required to ensure each dog has his fair share of food and no dangerous dog fight ensues.

Foods NOT safe for dogs

Below are some foods which are NOT safe for dogs to eat, if you are unsure of a certain food ask your vet for advice. Remember to introduce changes to your dog's diet gradually over 4 – 5 days. This can help prevent sudden tummy upsets.

- Avocado
- Rhubarb leaves
- Yeast dough
- Tomato leaves & stems
- Cooked bones
- Onion
- Fruit pips
- Mouldy / spoiled foods
- Coffee beans or ground / Tea
- Broccoli in large amounts
- Corn cobs
- Garlic
- Potato peelings/ green potatoes
- Alcohol
- Hops (used in home brewing)
- Raisins/grapes/sultanas
- Chocolate

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