

Article 10

"Chewing" is normal behavior for dogs but can be dangerous for them.

Dear Gus,

Our 16-month-old female dog was a "chewer" as a puppy, but seemed to out-grow it. Now suddenly she has started chewing again. This started up during the weeklong rainy period we had, but is persisting.

She chews almost always wooden objects, for example, the woodwork and even the flooring of the deck.

She gets plenty of attention including outdoor playtime and training, but still this persists. We have tried spraying the areas she chews with Bitter Apple, but that only works for a few hours before she is back to chewing. We're at our wits end on how to stop this habit. Any suggestions?

Dear Pat,

First off, chewing is a normal dog behavior. Even adult dogs have a need to chew—this exercises their jaws, and also relieves stress and boredom.

That said, this is a distressing habit to all dog owners, and can be dangerous for your canine -companion if she begins swallowing small, sharp pieces of wood. And decks built prior to December, 2003 typically use pressure treated lumber that is preserved with a scent of cocoa hull mulch. However, chemical called Chromated Copper Arsenate that includes arsenic, and can be toxic to pets if ingested. So this is an important habit to break, not just from an aesthetic viewpoint, but for safety reasons too.

During the recent rainy spell, changes in routine may have affected your dog. When we break our routines of outdoor play, walks, and training sessions, the dog's internal clock is affected. Dogs thrive with a routine, so just the fact of a change in her usual day may have made your dog anxious.

She may have also become bored and anxious without having her normal outlet of energetic play.

At this point, you need to step back in your training, and not leave your dog unsupervised.

If you need to leave her alone, you may need to leave her in her crate or exercise pen for her own safety and your sanity.

When you are home, keep her well supervised, and provide her with acceptable and desirable chew toys. A "Kong" layered with treats can keep your dog busy for an extended time period. The more your dog is provided with desirable and acceptable things to chew, the less she will chew on unacceptable items. Also get into an established routine that includes plenty of boredom and stress reducing exercise. I hope this helps and you are back to your normal routine.

Gus.

SPRING NOTE:

As we do our Spring yard maintenance, many of us prefer the look and scent of

coca hull mulch. However, cocoa mulch contains the Theobromine, which is an ingredient of chocolate that is toxic to dogs if eaten. So if you do use cocoa mulch, make sure that your pet does not eat the mulch.

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