

Mighty Mouths Kennel Enrichment Program

An enrichment program for shelter dogs



Shelters occasionally encounter dogs who are heavy chewers, or who chew and swallow inedible items in their kennels. The Mighty Mouths enrichment program provides these heavy chewers with appropriate alternatives that satisfy their need to chew and help reduce the stress of kennel life.

The Mighty Mouths program is also appropriate for “bully-breed” dogs, such as pit bulls, who tend to deteriorate quickly in kennels. Kennel enrichment helps to occupy and maintain the behavior of these dogs.

This enrichment program is suitable for dogs in Meet Your Match™ shelters as well as dogs in shelters that haven't implemented ASPCA®'s Meet Your Match™ Adoption Program.

What to Chew

The most important items to provide are those the dog can safely chew and swallow, and that will safely pass through their digestive tracts. These include:

- Newspaper or paper towel/toilet paper tubes for ripping and shredding.
- Boomer Balls®, which are large, tough, plastic balls that are difficult to destroy.
 - Many bully-breed dogs use these balls to play and chew roughly in their kennels.
 - Herding dogs often enjoy rolling and chasing the balls in the shelter's outdoor enclosure.
 - Holes can be drilled into the Boomer Ball®, transforming it into a kibble-dispensing device that keeps food-motivated dogs occupied.
- Heavy-duty rubber toys such as the KONG®. For an added challenge, suspend the KONG® by a rope from the top of the dog's kennel.
- Nylabones®
- Tug-a-Jug™
- Large, rolled-up rawhides
- Cereal box kibble-dispensing device, which provides a food motivator and the ripping and tearing that some dogs enjoy. To create these devices:
 - Collect a bunch of cereal boxes and remove the inside plastic pouch that contains the cereal.
 - Layer three to four boxes, pouring kibble inside the boxes, closing the tops and placing kibble in between each layer of boxes.
- Fresh crunchy fruits and vegetables, such as apples, large carrots, and cucumbers.

What Not to Chew

Without enrichment, heavy chewers have been known to chew and sometimes swallow parts of objects in their kennels, including bedding, food and water bowls, the kennel door, and toys.

When providing enrichment materials for dogs who tend to consume inedible items, be sure that the materials are inert and can safely pass through the dog's digestive tract. In addition, be sure that the dog cannot physically harm himself on sharp edges or damage his teeth on objects that are too hard.

Pass It On

If you identify particular items that are successful in occupying Mighty Mouth dogs, be sure to share this information with the dogs' adopters. The adopters can then keep these items available in their homes.

Getting the Goods

You can visit the following websites for more information about the brand-name products described above:

- www.boomerball.com
- www.nylabone.com
- www.kongcompany.com
- www.busybuddytoys.com/moreinfo.cfm?Product_ID=12

Questions?

For more information about the Meet Your Match™ Adoption Program or enrichment programs for shelter animals, contact ASPCA® National Outreach at outreach@aspca.org.