



NEW DOG OWNER TRAINING PROGRAM

FUN BACKYARDS: ENRICHMENT FOR DOGS

This information in this handout is a guide only

Environmental enrichment

It is interesting that many people will comment on an animal pacing in a zoo exhibit and think it must be bored. Those same people probably do not think that their family dog may have even less stimulation in their backyard. They don't see that the animal pacing in a zoo may be doing so for the same reasons their family dog destroys items, digs holes and barks at anything and everything. Zoos have come a long way in terms of making sure their animals have appropriate stimulation and housing so they are less stressed and lead comfortable lives.

We need to make sure that our family pets have the same consideration when it comes to their environment.

With our busy lifestyles, many dogs can be left to their own devices for hours each day. This isolation can lead to social and behavioural problems in our dogs. We have to provide both physical comfort and mental stimulation for dogs to be happy and healthy.

Dogs are social animals and need to have quality interaction with their human family every day. This can include training, going for a walk, play, grooming and massage or just sitting and patting the dog.

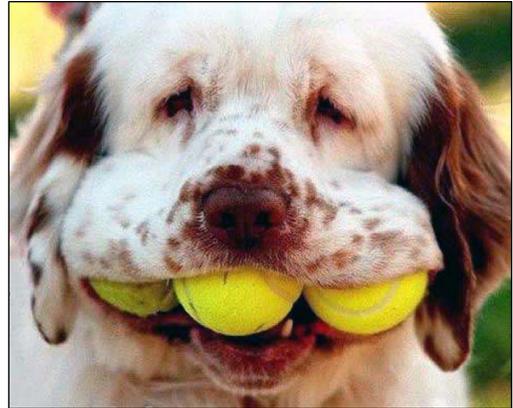
For those times when we can't be with the dog we need to make sure he has an interesting environment to amuse him in our absence. Normal healthy dogs sleep for a good part of the day so it is important that they have appropriate places to rest where they are not exposed to excessive heat, cold or weather conditions. They need food and plenty of fresh water.

For those times when they are not sleeping, eating or drinking we need to supply some ways to occupy their time and attention.

Before using any of the suggestions in this handout or any other enrichment source, check to make sure it is appropriate for the type, size and age of your dog. First and foremost you must be sure that the toys and activities that you give your dog will not harm him in any way.

Toys and more toys!

There are many great toys on the market that are designed to keep dogs occupied. Individual dogs will enjoy different toys. Just like children, dogs get tired of the same toys. Make sure you rotate the toys by gathering up at the end of the day, washing them and putting new toys out the next day. Any broken toys should be thrown away and new ones bought to replace them. Make sure you have the right size toy for your dog, too small toys can be swallowed and cause choking or injury to the dog. Better quality toys last longer and so are cheaper in the long run.



Take your dog for a ride.

Take your dog with you on those short trips to shops or to drop the kids at school, this way he gets to see the world outside his backyard.

Make sure he is secured with a proper dog car harness.

DO NOT leave him in the car even for a few minutes in the hot weather - dogs die in hot cars very quickly.

If your dog rides in the back of your ute or truck make sure he is properly secured with a flat collar (not a check chain) so he can not jump or fall out of the back. REMEMBER on hot days your dog is fully exposed to the sun in the back of your truck and he is getting additional heat from the reflection of the metal body of your vehicle. Don't assume because he has the wind in his face that he is not overheating. Make sure he has plenty of drinks or better still have a cover built for him.

Iceblocks

Great for those hot summer days!

You can freeze any number of things in an ice cream container of water. You can put in pieces of fruit (if your dog enjoys fruit) or suitable food scraps, toys like Kongs, cotton rope hanging out, or you can flavour the ice with gravy.

You can hang it by the rope or just leave it for the dog to work on as it melts.

Room with a view

If your dog doesn't get over excited by outside stimulation, you can provide peep holes in the fence for him to view the outside world, or build a platform so he can see outside his yard.

Wading Pool

Children's wading pools are a great way for dogs to cool off in warm weather or they can provide digging pits when filled with sand. Make sure the dog can get in and out of the pool. You can float toys or pieces of vegetable like carrot in the pool as an added attraction. Make sure the pool and water is kept clean and free of debris. If the pool is used for a digging pit you can bury items in the sand to keep the dog busy.



Kongs

Kongs are wonderful toys that are readily available at the shelter or pet stores. The Kong is stuffed with food and left for the dog to work on during the day. Make sure you have the right size for your dog. REMEMBER that food toys can be a problem in households that have more than one dog. Make sure you supervise the first time you use food toys. Check out the www.kongcompany.com web site for recipes and ideas.

Buster cube/ Treat ball

Buster cubes are another type of food activity toy. You can place dry food in the opening then the dog has to roll it around to get the food out. Some dogs need to learn how to get the food out so you may have to play with the dog and the cube until he gets the idea. You can also smear peanut butter or cheese near the opening to encourage him to look for the food - and of course a big cheer squad for when he succeeds!

Recycled plastic bottles

Be sure to remove the bottle top and the plastic ring for your dog's safety! Punch some holes in the sides, big enough for dry food to fall out. Fill the bottle with dry food for hours of fun.

Swinging tyre

Hanging an old tyre in a tree can be a good way to entertain a boisterous dog. Place toys or treats in the tyre so the dog is interested and gets a reward for playing with the tyre. Make sure the anchor point is strong enough so the dog can not pull it down on himself or get caught up and injured.

www.aussiedog.com.au has a great hanging "Home Alone Toy" check it out!

Treasure hunt

Instead of giving the dog his dry food in a bowl, go out in the yard before you leave home and scatter the food over the grass. That should keep him busy for a while. If he is used to having a Kong try hiding that for him to find.

Recycled Marrow bones

Get your butcher to cut the ends off the large marrow bones. When the dog has finished getting all the marrow out you can recycle it! Wash the bone then smear peanut butter, cream cheese or mince in the open end, fill the hollow centre with dry food and seal the other end with the peanut butter etc. This will keep him occupied for quite some time.

Dog walker

See if there is a dog walker in your local area and book your dog in for a walk. Make sure you check the walker's references and that your dog is comfortable with them before you decide to use the service.

Doggy mates

If you have friends who have dogs that are compatible with your dog, you might like to take turn about and have them visit.



Doggy door

Dogs that have access to the inside of the house often spend much of their day inside feeling safe and snoozing.

Some more enrichment ideas:

Remember: make sure the enrichment is suitable for your dog's size, age and breed!

Environmental enrichment:

- Old balls - football or soccer balls
- Rope toys
- Cat food
- Frisbee
- Tunnel
- Hanging toys
- TV or Radio on timer
- Grass and herb garden
- Old clothes that small like mum and dad
- Barrels
- Boomer Ball
- Flying fox on timer
- Tennis ball "spewer"
- Taped animal sounds
- Timed food dispensers
- Sprinklers on timers for hot days

Behavioural enrichment:

- Training sessions - can be tricks
- Dog sport - agility, tracking, earth hunting, fly ball
- Doggy Day Care
- Doggy Visitors
- Companion dog