

# canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

**Q** My dog is eating me out of house and home. Actually, he's just plain eating my home! Whenever I leave him alone, even for a few minutes, he finds something to destroy. I now own a three-cornered ottoman... HELP!!!

**A** Dogs are chewers, there's no doubt about it. Chewing is actually a very healthy activity for your dog—that is, when he's chewing his stuff and not yours. In many cases, dogs grow out of excessive chewing behavior once they get through their teething months. Chewing is a wonderful diversion and stress reliever for the bored or anxious dog. Understandably, in the eyes of many owners, the benefits of chewing diminish as soon as the dog unloads his anxiety on a favorite pair of slippers! So how do you solve this?

First make sure that your dog is well exercised and has access to plenty of positive, social contact with your family. A tuckered out dog is more likely to be a well-behaved dog. Next, make sure your dog responds to all commands, especially "come," "stay," and "give it." This will be a tremendous help when the little knuckle-head forgets the rules and trots off with your sofa pillow. Then practice good doggie management techniques. It's the old work smart not hard concept. Dog-proof your house by putting anything you don't want him to munch out of his reach. Put the garbage cans under the sink or buy trash containers with lids. Pick up the laundry and the kid's toys before you leave him alone in a room. Try to think like a dog and remove all possible sources of temptation. The less he fails, the faster he'll learn to discriminate between what's yours and what's his.

Provide your dog with plenty of legal chew toys, the more interactive and durable they are the better. Avoid latex toys and toys with parts that your destructive dog can tear off and swallow. Opt for toys like Kongs stuffed with yummy treats, interactive Buster cubes,

tough rubber chews, rope toys, etc. In order to keep him interested in his personal stash of stuff, rotate the toys periodically so they always seem new and exciting. Many dogs are pretty easy to fool! For times that you're going to leave him alone, reserve an extra-special, interactive chew toy that will keep him busy for a while.

So what do you do when he gets a hold of something you treasure? Assuming you've trained him to stay where he is and release objects on command, retrieve the object from his slimy grasp and immediately replace it with a GREAT legal toy. Praise him lavishly when he chews his toy. Play this my toy-your toy game with him every time you find him gnawing on something you don't want him to have. If he's a stubborn guy and obsesses after a particular object, use one of the taste deterrent products, like Bitter Apple, to make the object less desirable.

Your dog really can be taught that your house is not his chew toy! This assurance comes straight from the owner of a three-cornered ottoman!!!



## Your dog can be taught that your house is not his chew toy!

If you're having a problem with your cat or dog, call the Rescue Village Helpline at 440.338.4819, ext. 13 or send an e-mail to [askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org](mailto:askthetrainer@geaugahumane.org). We'll help you solve your problem or refer you to someone who can. The most frequently asked questions will find their way into the Rescue Village Reporter's Ask the Trainer column or onto Q104's Ask the Trainer radio segment that can be heard on Sunday's Wilde & Fee Morning Show during the 8 o'clock hour.

### Our Mission

To shelter and find homes for sick, injured, abused, and abandoned domestic animals that have no other alternatives

To foster compassion for all living things through education

To reduce pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs

To prevent cruelty by advocating and enforcing animal protection laws