

Vet's Corner



Tim Banker, DVM Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center

Tim Banker DVM, FAVD (Fellow of the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry) Dr. Tim Banker has been in general practice for over 40 years and has always seen the need for proper dental care for his patients. Today he is considered a pioneer in the field of Veterinary Dentistry. Dr. Banker is the owner of Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center and for the past 32 years he has been a referral dentist and seen patients from all over the Southern United States and Canada.

Dental Do's & Don'ts for the Holidays –



What should and should NOT
be in your pet's stocking this year!

When picking out a toy or treat to give my pets, what is safe for them to chew on?

As a veterinarian dentist, I get asked this question a lot. We all want to include our furry family in everything we do. So it's probably no surprise to you that according to the APPA (American Pet Products Association), at least half of all dog and cat owners will purchase gifts for their pets this holiday season! But are we really giving them a gift, or are we unintentionally causing them possible harm? As a pet owner, we often don't think about our pet's teeth when purchasing them a new toy. We are looking more at entertainment value, if it's cute, and quite possibly asking ourselves how long it will actually last before the dog tears it up. The reality is that there are a lot of pet toys out there that really are harmful to your pet's teeth.

One of the most overlooked damaging items is a tennis ball. The texture of the tennis ball (or toys covered in comparable rough fabric) can actually wear down the enamel of the teeth, especially when the ball is wet or dirty. For this reason we don't recommend any toys covered in this felt-like fabric; instead, give your pet a soft and flexible rubber ball.

Another toy often purchased for dogs are rope toys. Rope toys and similar items are often used to play tug-of-war. This 'game' is not only bad for multiple behavior problems but the action can cause mouth trauma and broken teeth! Instead play with your dog by using educational toys to make your dog work for treats. There are tons of great educational toys on the market, but you can also get creative with items around the house, such as paper cups and hiding a treat under one cup. When playing with traditional dog toys, teach your dog a command such as "give" or "drop" to release the toy instead of pulling the toy from his mouth.

"Give a dog a bone?" Well, in fact, don't! Certain bones claim to help remove plaque and calculus from teeth, but they can also break

teeth! In reality dog's teeth were not designed to chew on animal bones, antlers, cow hooves, hard plastic bones, or anything else that is hard and rigid. A dog's enamel is thinner than a person's and yet they have 4-10 times the bite force as a human. So, if they bite down on a hard substance with no 'give' (or flexibility) to it, the tooth will break. So what can you give a dog to chew on? The answer is tricky. Some dogs are more prone to fracturing teeth than others and even chewing on softer toys might not be recommended. If your dog is a chewer, never leave toys with him unsupervised. If he gets easily destructive or bored, try increasing his exercise first. If you must give him a toy to occupy him, then consider purchasing a thicker rubber toy (we like the Kong® Senior Dog Toy) that has an opening to insert treats. You can even fill the toy with your dog's kibble or non-fat plain yogurt and stick it in the freezer for 20 - 30 minutes to make it more solid. Hard frozen items are not recommended. Instead of buying bones and hard treats for your pet, try purchasing a can of food (preferably the same brand and type of food they are already used to eating), then roll the canned food out on a cookie sheet and bake at a low temperature (around 300 degrees for ~ 30 minutes). Once the canned food is slightly crispy, remove from the oven and use a pizza cutter to cut it into small strips. Store in refrigerator until ready to give your dog a treat.

So have fun spoiling your pet this holiday season, all the while protecting their teeth! Think of other things you may be able to give them or other pet lovers in your life, such as the gift of pet insurance, donating to a rescue, or sponsoring a homeless pet on their behalf. Or simply spending extra time with your beloved furry family, because in reality that is all they want this year anyway!



Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center

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from your friends at
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and Dental Center**



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