**Chewing and Biting**

* This is a normal and natural behavior. Your puppy uses its mouth to explore but it can also be an attention seeking behavior and could even be a stress reliever.
* Do NOT ignore chewing behavior because the behavior itself is self-rewarding. Chewing is usually the worst from ages 4-6 months. This does not mean that you should ignore the behavior and hope it goes away.
* “Bite Inhibition” is letting your puppy know how hard is too hard. This requires giving some feedback. Allow your puppy to mouth you but not to bite. If your puppy bites down quietly and calmly remove your body and walk away. Don’t physically reprimand or yell at them. This teaches your puppy that the bite was too hard and now they have to play by themselves. If not corrected, your puppy could grow into an adult dog that has a hard bite inhibition.
* Do NOT yelp or let out a shrill noise, as often times it increases your puppy’s excitement! Instead calmly remove your hand and your attention.
* If your puppy is chewing at your ankles just stand like a tree. Ask your puppy for a “Sit”. If your puppy sits give your puppy a treat. You could also wait for your puppy to offer their default behavior. After you reward with a treat redirect their attention to an appropriate toy.
* Always confine when unable to watch. This is safer for your puppy and your belongings.
* May be due to lack of stimulation. Increase your pet’s exercise. I don’t mean putting them in the backyard by themselves but take them for longer or more frequent walks, or engage in a longer game of fetch, play Hide and Seek or play Tug of War.
* Avoid like toys. Do not give your puppy stuffed animals if you have a child who has stuffed animals or let your puppy play with one shoe but not the rest. This is confusing.
* Interrupt your puppy if he is chewing on an inappropriate item with clapping or an upbeat tone and provide an appropriate chewable item. Always trade for a stolen item!
* If you scold or punish your puppy, this again does not teach them what is appropriate. It also only teaches them not to do it when you are around.
* Be sure that your puppy has plenty of appropriate toys to chew on and that they are being rotated. Kongs work great! They can constantly be exciting by adding peanut butter, spray cheese, cream cheese, wet dog food or yogurt**. Be sure to reward appropriate chewing.**
* Replace with like item. If puppy is chewing on a hard object, replace with a hard chew toy.

\*\*\*If you don’t want it chewed then don’t leave it on the floor!

* If your puppy is doing a lot of chewing and biting, make sure your puppy is getting enough sleep! A 12 week old puppy should be getting roughly 17 hours of sleep (out of 24 hours).

Check out this website for helpful tips. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Fl8HN-tKzE&t=11s>

This handout is provided by Nicole from the MN Valley Pet Hospital