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How to Choose Safe Chews for Your Pet

Many dogs and cats love to chew and it is an activity that we highly recommend for your pets. The benefits of chewing include dental health, as hard chews help to scrape and “brush” teeth clean, and mental stimulation. In the wild, dogs and cats would consume almost every part of their prey, including hide, fur, intestines, and even gnawing on the raw bones. Every part of the prey animal contributes to meeting the nutritional requirements of a dog or cat's diet. When you buy high quality, natural chews like the ones we offer at *The Wild*, your pets will also receive a great deal of nutritional value from them.

One of the common concerns pet owners face is the question of whether, and what, it is safe for their pets to chew. We hope to answer this question overall and to give you some insight into some of our specific treats for reference. We always recommend that you supervise when your pets are chewing and doing so will help you to determine your particular pet's chewing style. Some pets approach this calmly until it's fully broken down. Others are aggressive, or “power chewers,” and still others may have a tendency to try to gulp or swallow pieces too soon. It is important to know how your pets tend to approach this activity because it can help you to choose an appropriate and safe treat for them.

Hard, Cooked Bones

Our knuckle bones and meaty bones are from grass fed, free range cattle and have no added ingredients, flavors, chemicals or bleach. They are each just one ingredient and are slow roasted in an oven to reduce breaking and splintering. Size DOES matter when it comes to bones as you don't want your dog to be able to swallow the bone, or any pieces, whole. Finding a bone that is about the size of your dog's head is a good rule of thumb for dogs who want to swallow large pieces. If your dog is the type that doesn't chew and prefers to scarf, make sure to remove any large pieces that could be swallowed as they go since they may pose a choking risk or cause an intestinal blockage. If you have a “power chewer” who wants to work on a bone until it's gone, limit their chewing time to 1 hour or less. Bones are very dense and over consumption can lead to constipation or intestinal blockage. If needed, trade them a treat to remove the bone. For aggressive, hard chewers, check our freezers for a raw bone as giving an extremely hard bone to a powerful chewer may cause dental damage.

Spiral Chewy Bulls

These treats are comprised of beef gullet (esophagus), stuffed with a blend of ground esophagus and wheat flour, all wrapped in a long strip of natural beef rawhide. With these specific treats, the beef gullet is a thin casing with an easy to devour stuffing that can be worked through pretty quickly. The rawhide strip that's wrapped around the gullet is easily digestible when chewed properly, but it takes longer to break down compared to the rest of the treat. If your dog tends to swallow chews before they are completely broken down, you may run into a situation in which your dog has consumed the gullet-stuffed part of the treat before they are able to get the rawhide strip completely chewed through. This can result in them attempting to swallow the strip whole, or in too large of a piece for them to easily swallow or digest.

According to the AKC, "Rawhides are meant to be long-lasting chews that break down into tiny, soft pieces over time." If that doesn't happen, and your dog swallows the pieces in too large of a chunk, it can lead to choking or intestinal blockages. If your dog tends to not chew thoroughly, the Spiral Chewy Bull may not be the chew for them. But don't worry, they can still enjoy a similarly stuffed treat by trying the Tremenda

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Chewy Bull which is also comprised of beef esophagus stuffed with ground esophagus and wheat flour. This treat is wrapped in a strip of beef bladder, instead of rawhide, which means that all parts of the treat can be chewed in a more equal amount of time.

Beef Cheeks & Rawhides

Beef Cheek Rolls are one of the most popular longer lasting chews we carry at The Wild. They are sourced from Columbia, South America and made in Miami, Florida. They are a safer alternative to some commercially produced rawhide because these beef cheek rolls are 100% natural and made from soft, thick, easily digestible cow cheek skin above the neck, as opposed to rawhide chews which come from the body skin of the cattle. The beef cheek roll is made from much thicker, but softer, pieces of skin and meat. This means it takes a longer amount of time to chew through, but is easier to digest because of the softness of the skin. Some commercial rawhide can be made up of various pieces and parts of skin that are by-product of the leather industry which are then processed with chemicals to disinfect. These low-grade “rawhides” can result in a dog ingesting too much at one time as well as pieces breaking off easily due to the weak and highly processed nature of this product.

Conversely, the beef cheek skin is a solid piece of meat that is soaked in an all natural saltwater brine to disinfect the skin and remove the hair. It is then laid out and flattened, rolled, and baked in human grade ovens for 4 hours. The cheek rolls contain no additives, flavors, chemicals or preservatives and have a shelf life of 2 years. A very similar process is applied to the Tasman's Bison Hide Rolls and Boar Hide Rings that we carry which are also safer rawhide chews because they are single, solid pieces of hide that are processed at low temperatures without chemicals.

Whole Dog Journal recommends that pet owners “look for chews that are made from a single, thick sheet of rawhide.” This can be done by looking at the end of the roll to see whether it has been made from a single, long sheet of meat or whether a smaller sheet has been wrapped around a lot of bits and fragments. Both our Beef Cheeks and Tasman's Hides pass this test.

We highly recommend throwing away any pieces that are broken off or that may have developed sharp edges as your pet chews. Please note that the beef cheek and bison hide rolls will wear away as they are worked on, and quickly soften under the influence of a dog's saliva and the mechanical action of the dog's jaws. When the beef cheek or hide rolls are chewed to a length that a dog could possibly swallow them, we recommend taking them away. It is also a good idea to make sure your pet is taking consistent water breaks during this process. Consistent access to fresh, filtered water is essential to your pet's health and important while chewing.

All of the treats we offer at The Wild are safe for your pets to consume and digest, free from unknown or biologically inappropriate ingredients and all naturally treated and processed without the use of any dangerous chemicals. To determine the safest and most appropriate chew for your pets and your own specific needs, follow the guidelines and recommendations above or just ask one of our associates for help. We have a huge selection of healthy treats to choose from, ranging from bully sticks to raw bones with so much in between. We encourage you to experiment and to ALWAYS supervise when your pet is chewing to prevent over consumption, swallowing too much at once, or lodged pieces in the throat.

Sources:

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