

# If You Want Your Dog to Chew Bones . . .

It's crucial to examine your dog's chewing style closely. Does he try to get chew objects between his back teeth and bear down with all his might? Does he tend to destroy and/or ingest objects? Has he ever broken a tooth while chewing? If so, in our opinion, you should give him only Kongs or other safe, indestructible chew toys. Letting him loose on any type of recreational chew bone could invite serious trouble.

Only moderate and light chewers should be given recreational chew bones. And in either case, supervision is essential. The following guidelines will help keep your dog safe.

- ▶ Start giving your puppy fresh recreational chew bones when he is very small. Dogs who grow up chewing on bones tend to handle them more casually and adeptly than dogs who get them only as a rare treat. Infrequent, overenthusiastic chewing is bound to cause a problem.
- ▶ Buy a bone that is too large for your dog to fit between his back teeth.
- ▶ If at all possible, buy a fresh, raw bone from your butcher. Some supermarkets can provide frozen raw bones – check with the meat department.
- ▶ Ideally, buy fresh bones that have lots of tissue still

clinging to them. Tearing the tissue off the bones provides great exercise and entertainment for your dog.

- ▶ Discard any bone after a day or so of chewing. As bones dry out, they become harder and more brittle, increasing the danger of splintering. The bacterial count on an old bone will also increase as time passes.
- ▶ If you must buy a cooked bone, choose joints, like knuckle bones, instead of straight, tubular, marrow bones.
- ▶ Avoid narrow bones like ribs, which even small dogs can get between their back teeth, or any bone that has small pieces that could break off and cause a choking or blockage hazard (such as a shank fillet).
- ▶ Don't buy "sterilized" bones, which can be extremely brittle.
- ▶ If you want to find a product that's as "all natural" as possible, avoid smoked, flavored, and colored bones. (This includes bones that are an unnatural bright white.) Dogs don't need the added incentive to chew.
- ▶ If a chew bone shows fractures, fissures, or splinters, discard it immediately.