

# DESTRUCTION OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

## Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, we suspect that your dog may be destructive after joining your home. Dogs destroy things for different reasons: sometimes just to play, and sometimes because of anxiety. By following these guidelines your dog's adjustment will be faster and easier.

### PUPPY PLAY DESTRUCTION

You know your dog's destruction is out of fun when he or she destroys things both when you are at home and also when you are not at home. What's more, the things a playful dog destroys look like fun (ripping up pillows, chewing your favorite shoes). This is the most common reason for destruction in young dogs. To help curb your dog's playful destruction, provide:

- Exercise. Tired dogs are good dogs! Try to supply enough exercise to get your dog tired. Every dog is different, watch your dog for what activity level seems to satisfy their exercise needs and keep them healthy. Make sure you get an OK from your veterinarian. Easy and effective ways to exercise are brisk walks or jogs, playing fetch, and arranging playgroups with other dogs.
- Play and training exercises. The mental stimulation and exercise that play and obedience provides will not only help with your dog's adjustment but will also help to make you a leader and a better best friend. Fetch, chase games (where your dog chases you), hide and seek, sits, downs, and stays are fun games.
- Interesting and long-lasting chew toys. Most dogs have an inherent need to chew. Safe and interesting toys are Knucklebones, bully sticks, and Kong toys filled with cheese spread, peanut butter, or treats. All of these are available at pet supply stores. Try not to give your dog your shoes or clothes to chew on.
- Dog-proofing. Keep things out of your dog's reach (put your shoes in your closet). When you are not home, confine your dog to a safe place, such as a "boring" room, crate, or exercise pen.
- Supervision. If you see your dog start to chew on the wrong thing, say no, and gently exchange for the right thing. Try to remember that to an untrained dog, all things are chewable. Be patient as your dog learns right from wrong in a human world.
- Bad-tasting products on things you don't want chewed. Bitter-tasting sprays and ointments are available at pet supply stores. These are safe and deter most dogs from chewing. But because they don't last, they may have to be replaced daily.

### SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dogs with separation anxiety are only destructive when left alone. These dogs may also cry and urinate or defecate in the house when alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered around doors and windows because these lead to where the owner left or may be. They will chew doorways and windowsills or pull up carpeting by the front door. Many dogs display signs of separation anxiety shortly after arriving in their new

home, and most get over it. Here are some things you can do to help your dog adjust sooner. If your dog seems to be experiencing separation anxiety, please see the Special Adoptions handout for separation anxiety.

### FEAR OF NOISES

Some dogs are so afraid of loud noises like thunder or fireworks that they destroy things to get to safety. These dogs only destroy things when there are loud noises. If you suspect your dog's destruction is happening when he or she is afraid, try to camouflage the noises using a fan or air conditioner. You can also try to give your dog a readily-accessible safe place that is protected from the noises (bathroom, basement, crate padded with blankets). If these techniques fail, see your veterinarian to discuss anti-anxiety drug therapy.

**If you are not successful in curbing your dog's destructive behavior, please call your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.**