

Pet Toy Safety

- To keep your pet safe, it's important to know about pet toy hazards and how to avoid them.
- If you are worried about the safety of your pet's toys, talk to your veterinarian.
- Contact your veterinarian if you see your pet swallow a piece of a toy or if your pet vomits, has diarrhea, or has abdominal pain after playing with a toy.

The Basics

Pet toys, whether homemade or purchased, can pose hazards to your pet, so it's important to know what the hazards are and how to avoid them. When possible, supervise your pet while he or she plays with a toy. In addition, help keep your pet safe by following these toy safety tips:

- Read and follow all safety information that comes with a toy.
- Avoid toys with small parts that could detach and become a choking hazard.
- Avoid toys with sharp edges and points.
- Never give your pet balloons.
- Never give your pet balls small enough to swallow.

Testing for Toxins

The American Pet Products Association (APPA) checks with its suppliers to ensure that products are tested for lead and other toxins. In addition, some pet supply companies randomly test their products for lead and other toxins. However, there are no national standards for allowable levels of lead and other toxins in pet toys. Most pet supply companies use the same standards used by the children's toy industry. If you are worried about lead or toxin levels in your pet's toys, talk to your veterinarian.

- Never point a laser pointer at your pet's eyes. Laser pointers can damage a pet's (or person's) eyes.
- Purchase well-constructed plush toys with tightly secured parts.
- Toys with strings, ribbons, straps, or cords could wrap around your pet's neck. Always monitor your pet when he or she plays with these types of toys.
- Discard all packaging for toys as soon as they have been opened.
- Regularly inspect your pet's toys to ensure that they are not damaged. Repair or discard damaged toys before your pet plays with them again.
- Do not use your hands or fingers as pet toys. Teaching your pet that hands and fingers are toys could lead to unwanted biting or scratching of any person's hands or fingers.
- Use Frisbees specially made for dogs. Frisbees for humans are too hard and could chip a dog's teeth.
- Do not let your pet play with Christmas tree icicles, ribbon, rubber bands, paper clips, or plastic bags.
- Give your pet chew toys that are indestructible or are designed to be safely digestible.
- Do not give your pet chicken bones, which can splinter when chewed, possibly resulting in damage to the gastrointestinal tract.
- Do not let your pet play with children's toys because they may not be safe for pets. In addition, pet toys may not be safe for children.

When to Contact Your Veterinarian

Feel free to ask your veterinarian for advice in choosing safe toys for your pet. Contact your veterinarian if you see your pet swallow a piece of a toy or if your pet vomits, has diarrhea, or has abdominal pain after playing with a toy.