

## Choking and Intestinal Obstructions

Dogs use their mouths constantly: They fetch balls, play with their toys, gnaw on bones, chew sticks, and pick up strange, interesting items they find around the house. Not surprisingly, at times these things can become stuck in their throats or swallowed, both of which can cause serious, life-threatening situations.

Choking occurs when a ball, bone, or other object lodges in the throat and either partially or totally cuts off the dog's air supply. This requires immediate first aid (See lesson on Choking.) More common is intestinal obstruction, which occurs when the dog swallows an indigestible object. Often these objects pass through the gastrointestinal tract without incident. However, sharp items like rocks or bone shards can cause tears and lacerations, leading to infection. String or dental floss can literally wrap around the intestines and bind them, and expandable items like sponges or bread dough can swell in the stomach and cause a total blockage, cutting off blood supply to the bowel.

### EVERYDAY CHOKING/OBSTRUCTION HAZARDS

Dogs can be indiscriminate in the types of things they swallow. Any item you can hold in your fist is a potential choking or intestinal obstruction hazard. Here is a sample of some of the things vets have removed from dogs' mouths, throats, and digestive tracts:

Baby bottle nipples and pacifiers

Balls (racquetballs, handballs, golf balls, and rubber

"superballs" are most common)

Bones/bone shards (cooked and raw)

Buttons

Candy and food wrappers

Chewed-off pieces of dog toys

Clothing items such as socks, underwear, and panty hose

Coins

Corn cobs/corn silks

Diapers (dirty and clean)

Electronics—cell phones, iPods, remote controls

Fishhooks

Game pieces and small children's toys

Jewelry

Marbles, jacks, and small plastic figurines

Rawhide or pig ears

Refrigerator magnets

Rocks

Safety pins, paper clips, needles, tacks

Sewing and craft supplies

Shoelaces

Sponges

Squeakers from plush toys (Always supervise dogs that like to rip apart their plush squeaky toys to ensure they don't swallow the stuffing and/or squeaker.)

Sticks

String: meat-wrapping string, yarn, dental floss, ribbon

Tampons and other sanitary supplies

