

Backyard Fun For Your Dog!

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The principles outlined in this handout are intended as a general guide only. If your dog has shown aggressive behaviour toward you, your family or other people, you should speak with the instructor listed at the top of this handout.

Environmental Enrichment

With our busy lifestyles, many dogs can spend hours each day left to their own devices, sometimes leading to social and behavioural problems. As we learn more about animals it is increasingly apparent that mental health is of enormous importance to their wellbeing and lifestyle. The following is a list of suggestions to provide Environmental Enrichment for those times when your dog (lets call him 'Deefer') is left home alone. As dogs are social animals it is vitally important that you spend quality time with Deefer each day, so these ideas should be used in addition to your normal family interaction and an exercise regime appropriate for Deefer. You should take great care to ensure that there is no danger to Deefer or others in any of these activities.

Toys and More Toys

There are many great toys on the market that are designed to keep Deefer occupied: individual dogs will have different preferences. Deefer will very quickly get bored with the same old toy so put out a few at a time and ROTATE them daily.

Tour Guide

Take Deefer for a ride in the car when making those short trips such as dropping the kids off at school or going to the post office. It offers him a change of scenery. Even better if you stoop at the park on the way home and give Deefer a quick run. **NB.** *Remember the dangers of leaving dogs in hot cars.*

Iceblocks

Place some suitable scraps of food (raw carrot, cooked rice, pigs ear, raw bones, chicken necks etc) into an ice-cream container or kong, fill with water (or chicken or beef stock) and freeze. You could even freeze a knotted

rope into it so it could be hung somewhere or maybe bury it – as the ice melts the interest is renewed as treats come to the surface. Try making iceblocks with chicken stock – a cool idea for the hot weather!

Window or Viewing Platform

There are some dogs in this world, as with some people, who just love to know what's going on. If Deeper is one of these help him out by placing peepholes in the fence or providing a raised viewing platform. If he is highly excited by movement this may not be an appropriate activity.

A Wading Pool

Some dogs adore water so why not encourage it. You can purchase shallow moulded plastic children's pools (Clams) quite cheaply or alternatively make your own pond. Ensure that Deeper can easily get out of the pond and that it is just paddling depth, then drop some toys or treats, even vegetables such as carrot pieces or whole apples which will float and encourage him to play. An alternative would be to drop the same floating goodies or toys in Deeper's water bucket.

The Kong & The Everlasting Treat Ball

You may be familiar with these marvellous pieces of equipment available from good pet product suppliers which can be stuffed with food and left for Deeper to work on during the day. (Great for when you have to go to work, helps your dog to be keen for you to go to work instead of getting all worked up) Be aware with multiple dogs that using food games may cause some problems. Also, if your dog tends to scoff his dry food at dinner time, putting it in a Kong or Treat Ball can extend dinner time and create lots of fun for your friend. It is designed for Deeper to roll the ball around to get the food out. Some dogs take all day and some take five minutes! You can smear peanut butter or cheese near the opening to encourage them to start with.

Recycle Plastic Bottles

Be sure to remove the bottle top and the plastic ring for Deeper's safety. Punch some holes in the sides of the bottle, large enough for pieces of dry food to fall through. Fill the empty bottle with dry food for hours of fun.

Swinging tyre

Hanging an old tyre from a tree can be a great way to entertain a boisterous dog. Place toys or treats in the tyre to ensure Deeper is interested and gets some reward for the game. Make sure that the anchor point can take Deeper's weight as well as the abuse and also that Deeper cannot get caught up in it and become injured.

Check out www.aussiedog.com.au for the 'Home Alone', a robust interactive dog toy.

Recycled Rubbish

Empty milk cartons, cardboard rolls, egg cartons, cereal boxes and even pizza boxes can be used to entertain Deeper. Place some treats in them and let him find the treats and have fun destroying the boxes. The bonus is that you are provided with exercise picking up the pieces afterwards! Be careful though if Deeper likes to ingest foreign materials.

Treasure Hunt

Before you go out to work in the morning or out for dinner at night, instead of giving Deeper his regular dinner in a bowl take a cup of dry food and go out into your backyard and throw it all over the grass. That should keep him busy for a little while. Also try hiding his stuffed Kongs and bones so when you go off to work he is busy hunting for his food.

Recycled Marrow Bone

Next time you get marrowbones from your local butcher ask him to cut the ends off. When Deeper is tired of chewing on that old marrowbone, don't throw it out because you can recycle it! Take the hollow middle section and smear peanut paste, cream cheese or sausage mince onto the small end then fill it up with either dry or canned food or a mix of both and cover over the other end with peanut paste or cream cheese. Deeper will LOVE you for recycling his bones.

Dog Walker

If you have a busy schedule then consider the services of a dog walker. Be sure to thoroughly check references, insurance and get details of how many dogs are walked etc. Ask the walker to vary the route to make for more interesting walks.

Deepers Friends

Maybe Deeper has some friends he could visit once a week, or who could come to visit him. Spending a day with a compatible friend is a great way to enrich Deeper's life and provide some valuable socialization.

Doggy Door

Dogs that have access to inside the house often spend much of their day inside feeling safe and secure and SNOOZING!

More ideas for Environmental enrichment.

The list is endless and only limited by your imagination. See what else you can add to the list. Remember the motto— do no harm, so make sure that any ideas will not be harmful to your dog.

- 1 Training sessions – trick, agility obedience
- 2 Dog sports
- 3 Doggy Day Care
- 4 Old balls eg: footballs, soccer balls
- 5 Rope toys
- 6 Frisbee
- 7 Tunnel
- 8 Hanging toys
- 9 Pigs ear/sheeps ear
- 10 TV or Radio on timer
- 11 Treats in icecubes floated in large water container
- 12 Grass & Herb garden
- 13 Collection of ‘smelly items’ from outside environment
- 14 Barrels
- 15 Scent trails (bury treats around back yard, under pots, wrapped up in old rags etc)
- 16 Taped animal sounds
- 17 Parcel – muly wrapped
- 18 Clam shell – filled with shredded paper for indoor treasure dig
- 19 Pizza delivery – tip it into back yard (no onions)
- 20 Pinata – milk carton with small hole filled with treats and suspended
- 21 Bike tyres cut up (wire removed) with food smeared in them
- 22 Move furniture around
- 23 Play hide n Seek with your dog in a safe area. (The dog has to find you.)

NB. Some of these ideas may not suit your situation and may cause more problems – be sensible when choosing the best options for your dog.