

Rawhide and Other Dog Chews

About Rawhide:

For centuries wild canines and their predecessors chewed on the hides of their hoofed prey. Chewing the tough hide provided cleaning action for teeth, exercise for gums, and a source of sport for the young. Only since 1959 have we recognized the dog's natural desire to chew animal skin and its benefit to domestic dogs.

What is Rawhide:

Rawhide is the inner layer of the hide of any cleft-hoofed bovine livestock. Beef hide is premium rawhide made from cows raised for consumption. American beef hide is derived from corn-fed cows within U.S. borders.

What Makes it so Tough:

Collagen fibers link to make the animal's hide tough yet flexible. Human skin has the same basic structure but is much thinner.

What is it Made From:

The animal's skin is split into inner and outer layers. The tough outer layer is used for leather shoes, garments and upholstery while the softer inner layer is cut and formed into different shapes for dog chews.

Choosing a Size and Shape:

Your dog's preference will vary with different beef hide shapes. Fortunately, chews come in every size and shape imaginable. It is important that the chew be large enough, and thick enough that your dog cannot easily chew up and swallow a large piece or the whole chew. Dogs should be supervised with their chews to monitor for ingestion of large chunks. Rawhide that requires more than seven days to chew should be replaced due to dirt and bacteria build-up.

Types of Chews:

- **Ground rawhide chews**
These chews come in all shapes and sizes and consist of ground rawhide held together with binder. Best for: Choosy dogs, or dogs with sensitive mouths.
- **American Beef Hide Chews**
Made from U.S. feeder cattle, it is the premium chew choice because of its consistency, softness and taste. Best for: Most healthy dogs.
- **Pressed Rawhide Chews**
Made from layers of skin pressed together by machine, it is very hard. Best for: Very aggressive chewers.

Dental Benefits:

Infections, kidney, and heart disease can result when poor dental health gives bacteria a channel to enter your dog's body. Mineralized plaque forms a hard deposit on the tooth surface called *calculus*. Excess acid damages the gums resulting in gingivitis. As rawhide is chewed and moistened, it wraps around the teeth and rubs off plaque and calculi. Clean teeth = fresh breath!

Most bad breath in dogs is caused by gum disease. Inflamed gums, plaque, and calculus harbor the bacteria that creates mouth odor.

Even young dogs need dental care. 85% of dogs two years of age or older have some form of periodontal disease. Ask your veterinarian about a program to keep your dog's teeth clean.

Behavior Benefits:

All dogs have an inherent desire to chew, especially puppies. Aberrant chewing can be a sign of boredom, lack of exercise, or a vitamin deficiency. This drive can exhibit itself on furniture and clothing items. Beef hide offers dogs a more acceptable chewing outlet.

Will My Dog Chew Such a Hard Rawhide?

When collagen in the skin dries out, it becomes stiff. As your dog chews, the saliva moistens and softens the rawhide.

Which Dogs Should Not Have Chews?

If your dog has gastrointestinal disease or is eating a therapeutic diet, you should seek a veterinarian's approval before feeding chews. Dogs with beef allergies or that consistently swallow bones whole should probably not receive chews.

How Often Should I Feed Chews?

Rawhide is not a food, but a relatively safe, chewable toy. It is high in protein, low in fat, and has fewer calories per ounce than a typical dog biscuit. An hour of chewing daily is a good rule of thumb for feeding chews. Always supervise your dog while he is chewing his rawhide, since a dog could potentially choke on a large piece of rawhide if swallowed. Once a chew is small enough for a dog to swallow it whole, it should be taken away and discarded.

Other Options for Chews:**Antlers:**

Natural antler chews last much longer than traditional rawhide or synthetic chew toys, and often, even longer than raw bones! Deer antler chews are a great natural source for the calcium, phosphorus, sodium, magnesium, iron and zinc your dog needs. Antlers are a clean, odorless, non-staining, non-greasy treat that can keep active chewers busy for days.

Bully Sticks:

Made from fibrous digestible beef muscle, these are a great hard, tough chew sharing many of the same qualities and benefits as rawhide.

Yak Milk Dog Chews:

100% natural chews, made from yak and cow milk, salt and lime juice.

Raw Frozen Bones:

Raw bones are an excellent natural source of minerals, essential fatty acids, proteins, calcium, phosphorus and enzymes. Additionally, they can help promote gum and teeth health for better breath! Always supervise your dog when chewing bones.

Sweet Potatoes:

Dried yams, or sweet potatoes, make excellent nutritious treats that are rich in antioxidants.