

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Based on an article that first appeared at [GeniusVets](#)

As the biggest gift-giving month of the year, December is aptly also “**Safe Toys and Gifts Month.**” While one might assume this applies only to young children, the message behind this month is also highly relevant to our pets. From choking hazards to toxic chemicals, there are plenty of products on the market to be wary of when it comes to your pets. As the holidays quickly approach, we’re providing guidance on choosing gifts for your dog that are both fun and safe.

Consider Size and Breed

Your dog’s breed and size should be the first consideration when choosing toys. Miniature breeds will enjoy smaller toys, while large breeds gravitate towards bigger toys. Mouth size is significant when selecting toys, as you don’t want to introduce tiny toys to breeds with larger mouths, which could become a choking hazard. In addition, breeds with larger teeth tend to be more destructive with toys, so look for tough, durable toys that won’t easily tear apart — exposing stuffing and squeakers they could potentially ingest.

Avoid Small Parts

Staying on the topic of choking hazards, small parts on the outside of toys can also pose a threat to your dog.

Avoid toys for dogs that feature the following:

- Beads
- Buttons
- Plastic eyes
- Bells

- Other embellishments that your dog can easily bite off and potentially swallow.

In addition to being a choking hazard, those small parts can lead to intestinal blockages.

Select Bones Carefully

Marrow bones are widely available in butcher shops and grocery stores, and they're inexpensive and long-lasting — making them the go-to bone option for many dog owners. However, they come with a certain level of risk with the fatty marrow found in the center of the bone causing pancreatitis in some dogs. If you choose to give your dog the gift of marrow bones this holiday season, scoop out the center before giving it to them. In addition, be sure to give them only raw marrow bones, as cooking bones makes them more fragile and likely to splinter.

Rawhide

Rawhide is another dog bone widely available but very much discouraged by veterinarians. If your dog only chews on rawhide bones and does not ingest them, they are relatively safe — but it's nearly impossible to monitor their activity with rawhide to ensure this is the case. When swallowed, rawhide absorbs water in their system and swells inside the stomach, growing to a size that makes it nearly impossible to pass through their intestines. Surgery then becomes the only option to remove the rawhide. Pressed rawhide chews are far safer if you've been giving your dog rawhide bones and don't want to deprive them entirely of the treat they've come to love.

Latex Toys

Latex is a commonly used material in dog toys, but dogs can have an allergic reaction to it just as humans can. A latex allergy results in a skin

rash that can blister and lead to hair loss in dogs. Be sure to check the labels on dog toys you're considering, and avoid anything that consists of latex. This is a "better safe than sorry" scenario, as an allergic reaction in your dog can leave them feeling very ill and uncomfortable when you want them to enjoy the holiday.

Toys with Phthalate

A compound found in vinyl, Phthalate, emits a heavy smell typical of vinyl products fresh out of their packaging. The heavier the scent, the more Phthalates are present in the product, making it that much more dangerous. This compound can be deadly to dogs and other pets in the home, leading to issues with their kidneys, liver, and more. When dogs play with a vinyl toy with Phthalate, they breathe in the fumes and get it into their mouths, where it eventually makes its way to their bloodstream. Over time, this can lead to significant medical issues as it builds up in their bodies.

While toys are critical for providing your dog with exercise, mental stimulation, and entertainment, careful selection and research are essential to ensure your toy selections don't do more harm than good. Avoid the types of toys above, and your upcoming holiday season shouldn't warrant any trips to the emergency veterinarian.

The [AVMA](#) also reminds us in their list of healthy holiday gifts that we can spoil our pets with more than just toys this joyous season. If your dog swallows something they're not supposed to or is showing signs of distress, seek emergency care right away. But if you're looking for more opinions on gifts and safe, fun ideas for your dog this holiday season, feel free to give us a call!