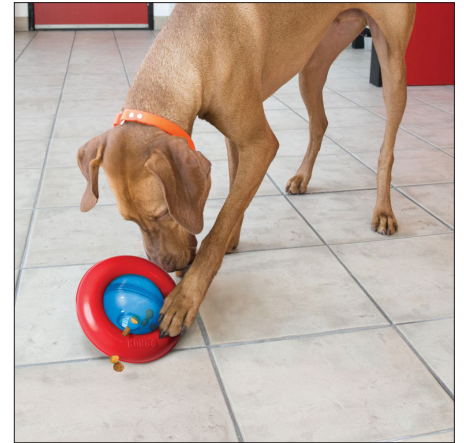




## Minimise boredom related behaviours for kennel dogs

Dogs that spend majority of their time in kennels may be prone to exhibiting boredom related behaviours. Examples of boredom related behaviours are but not limited to digging, chewing, barking and overall destructive behaviour.

In order to minimise boredom related behaviours greyhounds should be provided with things to do especially in the case of a greyhound chewing. By allowing the greyhound to have something they are allowed to chew and that is reinforcing for them they may be likely to do that rather than chewing things you would prefer them not to. Options for chewable items could include toys and chew treats such as bones. It should be noted that between approximately 16 weeks and six (6) months puppies are teething. Teething toys should be provided to them. The best kind are soft rubber toys that can massage the gums and relieve the pain. These toys can be made more reinforcing by using peanut butter (ensure there is no Xylitol in the ingredient list, cream cheese and gravy amongst other things that make that toy more rewarding to chew than the things you do not want them to chew.



An instinct to dig is very common in canines. The best option if there is a certain area of a yard you do not want them to dig in is to manage the access they have to those areas. Otherwise it may help to provide a designated digging area that is more rewarding to dig in than other areas. This can be done by burying treats and toys in those areas. Deterrents can also be used in areas that cannot be fenced off. Deterrents could be store bought garden repellents or homemade sprays can be used although they will need to be re-applied regularly to remain effective. Homemade sprays can be anything citrus based or mint based.

In a circumstance when you might have a specific dog that barks excessively it is important to identify the reason why the dog could be barking. There are various reasons why a dog could be barking such as boredom, separation anxiety, general anxiety or fear, harassment by other animals, attention seeking, attempting to initiate play or excitement. In order to rectify the barking behaviour it is important to identify the reason the dog is barking initially.

A dog that is bored could be provided with various toys/food dispensing toys as a way to enrich its environment. A dog suffering from separation anxiety should be trained to spend short periods alone (this will aid in retirement later in life). During these periods chew treats can be provided to make the absence of the person/animal more rewarding. It is important to note that if the dog begins to vocalise you should not return to them unless they are quiet, otherwise they are reinforced by your return and will learn that in order to get your attention they should just vocalise. For a dog that is suffering from general anxiety or fear, the stimulus causing fear/anxiety should be removed if possible or 'counter-conditioning' should be utilised to turn the negative feeling as a result of that stimulus into a positive one. This can be done using praise, food rewards or toy rewards. A dog that is being harassed by other animals should be removed from the situation and housed in a different location if possible. For a greyhound that is trying to initiate play this is fairly normal communication for canines. However if this occurs excessively the behaviour can be interrupted however the greyhound should be rewarded for calm behaviour. If an alternate behaviour is not rewarded likely the behaviour will continue. A similar method would be utilised for a greyhound that is barking out of excitement.

A great way to minimise any of the aforementioned boredom related behaviours is to provide your dog with ways to use the energy they already have (and use to get up to mischief) to play with toys you provide. By providing toys this can minimise chewing, digging and barking as they have an outlet for their energy. Various types of toys can be provided and harder toys can be provided for dogs that destroy soft toys easily such as rope toys or harder plastic ones. Another way to harness their energy is, instead of feeding them in a normal bowl where they inhale their meal in a short space of time is to provide their meal in a food dispensing toy. By doing this they exert energy and feeding time is a way of mentally stimulating your dog. Greyhounds are often described as 'couch potatoes' so providing them with toys shouldn't interfere with them relaxing for their next race as once they are finished playing they will likely have a nap.

### Case Study

Rebecca Mcauley-Fry has had great success with her particularly destructive greyhound Dennis by providing him with an assortment of toys. As she can tell you it has been an ongoing nightmare to provide Dennis with bedding and rugs as he was partial to destroying them.

Since utilising toys (rope toys, plush toys, plastic bottles, food dispensing toys) as a way of enriching his environment he still has his carpet on his bed and has been rugged without destroying it. As a tip, these toys came from Ebay for an affordable price saving money on having to buy new bedding/rugs as regularly.

One toy in particular (slightly more expensive), the Kong Gyro has been used when feeding Dennis. Food dispensing toys are often utilised by owners with domestic dogs that are showing boredom related behaviours such as chewing. By feeding them in a toy wherein they have to figure out how to access the food they typically spend more energy working that out rather than using that energy to destroy items. Food dispensing toys can even be made as simple as poking some holes in a drink bottle.

