

Why do dogs chew so much? And should we let them?

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Puppies and mature dogs chew. A lot—and not just while they are eating.

While this drives some [owners](#) mad, veterinary scientists suspect there must be functional reasons why your best friend chews bones, sticks, shoes, furniture, your hand. But science has largely overlooked the reasons why.

To find out, Professor Paul McGreevy at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science is leading a study to explore the functional significance of gnawing (and chewing) in [domestic dogs](#).

He wants to hear from the dog-owning public what they give their pets to munch on.

Professor McGreevy said, "Gnawing is a common element of the canine behavioral repertoire, with feral dogs spending much more time chewing than hunting. So, the influence of gnawing on domestic dog welfare is likely to be highly significant.

"At first glance, we get the sense that this activity keeps dog's teeth clean. But despite the importance that dogs place on gnawing, the activity has been largely overlooked by science."

In veterinary behavioral medicine, gnawing is reported in association with distress and anxiety; as a part of destructive behavior that can occur either when dogs are left alone or being confined, regardless of the presence of the owners.

"Gnawing could have potential as an indicator of welfare problems," Professor McGreevy said. "Furthermore, gnawing the wrong items can cause [physical injuries](#) to the teeth or gums and can result in the ingestion of foreign bodies if dogs chew inappropriate objects such as stones, sticks and fabrics."

An understanding of the significance of chewing could see the

development of new techniques to assist anxious dogs.

"Here at Chew HQ, as we've informally called ourselves, we are asking owners to tell us all about the types of chewable items they give their dogs to chew, tear and gnaw.

"We want to hear how often dogs are given these goodies and how they behave before and afterwards. We are also interested in the state of the dogs' teeth and their gut function."

Dog owners can complete the survey [at this link](#).

Provided by University of Sydney

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