



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Food Containing Toys for GDB Puppies

Toys that contain food can be a useful tool in helping puppies learn to settle. They also give higher-energy puppies something to do when the raiser cannot give them sufficient stimulation in other ways. Only the toys listed below may be used with food. There are many food-dispensing toys on the market but most are not safe and/or not practical for GDB puppies. These toys have been tested extensively and although they are very durable, care must always be taken with any type of toy left with a puppy. Black Kongs are stronger than red Kongs but some pups can destroy even black Kongs (and may be especially motivated to do so if there is food inside!)

Stuffed Kongs

Permission is not needed to utilize food-stuffed Kongs with puppies under 16 weeks of age so long as the guidelines below are followed. Raisers of puppies over 16 weeks of age should receive permission from their leader to utilize food-stuffed Kongs. Usage should be noted on the monthly report and communicated to the CFR. The puppy should be weaned off the stuffed Kong as it matures and/or the behavioral reason it was utilized for is resolved.

Situations where a stuffed Kong may be beneficial:

- Introducing puppies to being left alone in a crate
- When riding in vehicles for nervous puppies
- As part of a behavior modification program for puppies with anxiety in the crate
- In an ex-pen or on tie down at work with a higher energy puppy

Stuffing the Kong

The puppy's regular kibble should be soaked and stuffed into the Kong. For young puppies, or to get an older puppy interested in the stuffed Kong, it should not be frozen as this makes it harder for the pup to get the kibble out causing the pup to lose interest. Once the puppy is enjoying the stuffed Kongs, the kibble should be lightly soaked before inserting and the Kong frozen. If the kibble is just lightly soaked small pieces will fall out as it defrosts making it more enticing than a 'block' of food in the Kong which may be hard for the pup to reach and discouraging.

The amount of kibble used should be deducted from the pup's normal feeding ration.

Very occasionally, a puppy with lower food drive will have no interest in a kibble-stuffed Kong. The CFR may give permission for higher value food to be used, such as canned dog food (following guidelines for unfrozen/freezing above). Peanut butter may be used but a no more than a tablespoonful and care must be taken that the product does not contain Xylitol, an artificial sweetener that is poisonous to dogs.

When higher value stuffings are used it must be noted on monthly report. The puppy should be gradually weaned off the higher value stuffing to regular kibble.

Consideration should be given to puppies with sensitive GI systems when looking at alternative stuffings. Raisers and leaders should check with the CFR for suggestions.

The Wobbler

The “Wobbler” is made by the Kong Company and can be purchased at most pet stores or online. The smaller size should be used for puppies 25lb and under and the large size for puppies over 25lb:

<https://www.kongcompany.com/dog/play-type/interactive/wobbler>

Raisers should receive permission from their leader to utilize the Wobbler. Usage should be noted on the monthly report and communicated to the CFR.

The Wobbler may be used in a plastic crate but is noisy and creates movement so a stuffed Kong is a better choice in that situation. It is not recommended for use in a wire crate or on tie down due to the scattering of kibble. Ideally the Wobbler would be utilized in an x-pen or dog run. The leader may use discretion and in some situations allow use of the Wobbler in other small, uncluttered, enclosed areas- such as a patio or picked up bathroom.

The puppy’s regular kibble is the only food that may be placed in the Wobbler. The amount of food used in the toy must be deducted from the puppy’s meals and should not exceed the amount the puppy would normally be fed.

Some types of kibble are small and the hole that the kibble is dispensed from is so large that too much food escapes at once. The hole can be made smaller by partially blocking it with duct tape *on the inside* of the Wobbler. Duct tape should not be placed on the outside tempting the pup to pluck it off!

Care should be taken to tighten the Wobbler firmly so that it does not become unscrewed as the pup is playing with it. If the puppy gnaws on the Wobbler, or persists in getting one apart, the CFR should be consulted.

Like any toy, the Wobbler should be checked regularly for wear and tear and discontinued if the puppy is chewing it excessively.

The Mango

The Mango is available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/M-C-works-Aggressive-Chewer-Dental-Indestructible/dp/B082R2H9ML>

This toy can be loaded with food in two ways: small kibbles can be inserted to fall out when the toy is moved around, or the grooves can be coated with a soft/sticky food. Soaked and mushed up kibble (to make a paste) will work, but for puppies with lower food drive, peanut butter or canned dog food may be used. As with stuffing the Kong, CFR permission is needed to utilize higher value food. For puppies on a restricted diet due to GI issues, canned i/d may be used. The Mango should be soaked and well washed after each use.

The Mango is for unrestricted use with puppies 16 weeks and under, with uses similar to the Kong. It is not approved for puppies over 16 weeks except as noted below.

For Husbandry

The Mango is a great tool for use in husbandry such as grooming and nail trimming. Leader permission is needed for use as a husbandry tool with puppies over 16 weeks and it should be noted in the puppy’s monthly reports. Puppies that are uncomfortable/sensitive to e.g., ear cleaning, vet exams, nail trimming, may tolerate the procedure better when distracted by food smeared on the Mango. Classical conditioning is also occurring when the Mango is utilized this way so that future handling is more likely to be well tolerated by the puppy. The puppy should be gradually weaned off the necessity of the Mango and the CFR consulted for guidance if discomfort with this type of handling continues.