INTERACTIVE TOYS

Wild dogs, or dogs in natural situations, spend a great deal of time finding and eating food. Whether they are scavenging for remains or rubbish or actively hunting they are wandering in search of it, investigating environments and possibly catching and eating it. In the kennel environment the dogs eat all their food in one or two meals, depending on their age and the kennel routine. This results in under stimulation and boredom, which contributes to issues like barking and destructive behavior (i.e. bed chewing).

Chewing behavior is particularly important to dogs. They use it to occupy themselves for the above reasons, and also it can help soothe them when they are anxious. It is impossible to suppress this behavior, however redirecting it to activity toys that enable food finding or other types of enrichment improves welfare and reduces damage.

How to use "Kong" type toys or hollow activity toys:

1.   Start with a couple of clean hollow toys appropriately sized for your dog.
2.   Place a small piece of freeze dried liver, peanut butter or cheese into the hole in the top
3.   Fill one third of the cavity with treats such as biscuits, marrow bites
4.   Fill the last two-thirds with canned food or roll mixed with food nuggets.
5.   Leave a tit-bit sticking out of the opening. This will immediately provide a reward and encourage the dog to continue using the kong.

Make it easy for the dog to remove the stuffing for the first couple of times. As they become more experienced you can make the job more challenging by changing the fillings used:-

Try:

1.   Stuffing the toy tighter.
2.   Wedging biscuits inside the cavity using the inside rim of the opening to secure them.
3.   Freeze it. Try various combinations of canned food, gravy, noodles, rice and mashed potato mixed with food nuggets and freeze.