

Pitch These 5 Items in the Trash for a Safer, Happier Pet

Many pet parents are totally oblivious to the dangers these items pose. So you're quite likely to have many if not all these hazards in your home right this very moment. Removing them could spare your dog injury - and you considerable heartache and financial loss.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Many dedicated dog parents don't give much thought to the condition of their dog supplies
- It's very likely some of the accessories you're currently using might be better off in the trash

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Taking excellent care of your canine family member means paying attention to small things — things you might not even realize need to be cleaned or repaired or discarded.

Veterinary journal dvm360 offers some great tips on dog-related supplies you probably need to "trash right now" for the sake of your dog's health and well-being (and yours).

5 Things Most Dog Parents Need to Toss Right Now

1. **Toss this: Retractable leash** — "Leash" is probably not a good word to describe the thin cord used in many retractable devices. In addition, the real purpose of using a leash to walk a dog is to keep the animal safe and under the owner's control. Retractable leashes often do the opposite unless you have a perfectly trained dog.

There are many reasons to avoid or reconsider use of a retractable leash, starting with the fact that on this type of leash, your dog can get far enough away from you to either get into trouble or into harm's way.

Retractable leashes are also responsible for many injuries to both dogs and dog walkers — from superficial burns and cuts to horrific amputations.

In most cases, these devices are also wholly counterproductive to training a dog to walk politely on lead. The very nature of retractables trains dogs to pull on the leash to extend the lead. Needless to say, this pulling behavior will be repeated whenever the dog is on a standard leash.

Replace with this: 6-foot flat leash

2. **Toss this: Plastic food and water bowl** — Plastic food and water bowls are inexpensive and convenient. Unfortunately, not only are they impossible to thoroughly sanitize, but as the plastic begins to break down, it can leach toxic chemicals into your dog's food and water.

In addition, bacteria and oils can get trapped in the peeling plastic, which can cause skin irritation or worse.

Some dogs can develop an allergy to the materials and dyes in plastic bowls, and they've also been linked to tear staining. In addition, aggressive chewers have been known to gnaw their bowls into small pieces and swallow them.

Replace with this: Stainless steel, porcelain or glass food and water bowls

3. **Toss this: Old, stinky and ill-fitting collar** — Your dog's collar is a little like your underwear. He wears it all the time, and it's very close to his skin. And while most people wouldn't think of wearing the same underwear day in and day out without ever washing or replacing it, many dogs' collars never get washed or replaced.

It's important to keep your pet's collar clean to reduce the risk it will cause an infection or hot spot on his skin. Old, faded collars, those with an unpleasant odor and collars that have either grown too tight or too loose, need to go.

Replace with this: New collar

4. **Toss this: Dull nail trimmers** — Nail trims are never the highlight of a dog's day, but one thing that can make a bad situation worse is a pair of dull clippers. If the cutting surface isn't sharp, instead of a quick clean snip, the trimmers can crush and split the nail.

Not only is this uncomfortable or even painful for your dog, but it tends to make you — the human at the other end of the clippers — tense up. Your dog, in turn, picks up on your stress, which doubles hers.

In a worst-case scenario, a nail trim marred by dull trimmers can make your dog run from the room every time they come out. Soon, your canine pal has talons instead of nails.

Replace with this: Freshly sharpened or new nail trimmers, or a battery-operated rotary tool (e.g., a Dremel)

Watch me demonstrate how to trim a dog's nails in the video below:

5. **Toss this: Broken or chewed up toys** — Many dogs are toy slayers. And unfortunately, it's easy for your dog to bite off a piece of a toy or remove the stuffing and swallow it. If he does this out of your sight, you might not even know he's walking around with a foreign object in his gastrointestinal (GI) tract.

With any luck, the toy piece will leave your dog's body whole when he poops or throws up. However, if it lodges in his throat or GI tract, it can become a life-threatening situation requiring expensive surgery to remove. It's a good idea to review the contents your dog's toy basket on a regular basis and get rid of anything that could pose a choking hazard or GI obstruction. I also recommend avoiding potentially toxic toys.

Replace with this: Repaired or new nontoxic toys

As your dog's guardian and advocate, it's your job to keep her safe and healthy. The five items listed above are potential hazards that many pet parents never even think about.

Sources and References

[dvm360](#) October 4, 2016
