

Pet Dental Health AND Behaviour Enrichment Toys

...2 benefits for the price of one!

By Gillian Shippen, Pets Need A Life Too www.petsneedalifetoo.com

August is pet dental health month – now you may be asking how behaviour enrichment has anything to do with good dental hygiene?

Well, did you know that there is at least two companies that now provide behaviour enrichment toys that incorporate dental chews in their range?

KONG® has come up with the **Marathon Range** that has a replaceable dental chew insert to make their food dispensing toy last that little bit longer. The **Marathon** chew treat locks firmly into the toy, creating a long-lasting challenge which is great for boredom, stress or a rewarding chew session. The treat has a mouth-watering bacon flavour and is made in the USA. **KONG® Marathon** is available in two shapes and sizes, a Ball and the Bone, with treat refills sold separately.



But it is also worthwhile mentioning that some of the other products within the **KONG®** range also help promote dental health by encouraging chewing and therefore massaging gums and cleaning teeth.

The **KONG® Quest Range** is a gorgeous range that can be used with both moist and dry foods – with two types in the Quest Range - Critters and Shapes. **KONG® Quest** Critters are a triple threat: adorable, stimulating and fun. These toys are designed to be stuffed with treats to simulate natural foraging behaviours and extend treat time. As an added benefit, the Quest range clean teeth and massage gums while dogs chew. Quest Critters are available in four characters and two sizes (small & large), Owl, Bear, Frog, Cow and there is three Shapes also with two sizes; the Starpod, Bone and Wishbone



each with unique treat pockets for a varied foraging experience. All characters in the Quest range come in several different colours.

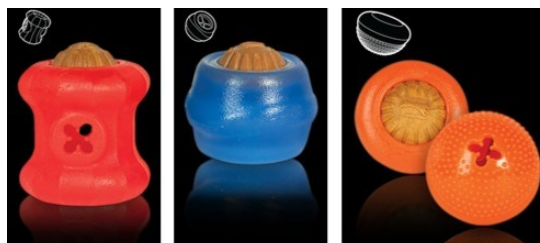
The Starpod has proven to be an instant favourite amongst my clientele.

The photo below was sent to me by a happy customer showing how they have had good use from their Quest Starpod. They have placed Yoghurt and other yummy treats in the chambers and the frozen it – the dog loved it (and so did the client as it provided excellent stimulation for the dog)



Another company that has toys that are also great for dental hygiene is **Starmark**.

Starmark Mental Stimulation toys help keep pets mentally engaged in an activity they enjoy. They help foster natural hunting and foraging behaviours, and help prevent destructive boredom behaviours. A selection of their toys can be used with **Starmark Treats**, or with portions from your dog's regular meal to turn mealtime into playtime. They have the **Everlasting Treat Ball**, **Bento Ball**, **Fire Plug** and Treat dispensing ball that hold their Everlasting Treats which will be a good addition to a dogs dental hygiene tool box.



The **Everlasting Bento Ball** has special ridges on to assist with massaging the gums whilst in use and coupled with the treats, makes a great dental option. All are made with virtually indestructible material that is stronger than rubber whilst being free of latex, vinyl and phthalates! They are great for powerful chewers, providing hours of challenging play – the Treat ball system encourages play which helps reduce anxiety and boredom behaviours. Additional features include the fact they are available in Small, Medium, & Large dog sizes and are also dishwasher safe.

The Interlocking Treats are the first to lock in place on a toy for a fun chewing challenge.

The Everlasting Treats are long lasting dental chews that are hard like a bone to help keep your dog's teeth clean. Pair them with the Starmark toys for challenging chewing fun. The treats can act as a cap on the dispensing toys or they can be consumed as a treat on their own.



Above you can see my dog Busta utilising the **Every Lasting Fire Plug**.

Currently in Australia the only treats available are the Wheat Free Chicken flavoured Everlasting treats as they are currently under review by AQIS to ensure no irradiation is used. Bringing the treats into Australia strictly under permit ensures that all nutritional values are intact and the product is safe for pets. This has created a long delay of the Everlasting treats & corresponding toys that feature these snacks however every effort is being taken to bring this renowned Boredom Buster range back to Australian pets as soon as possible

Another overlooked range of dental toys is from PetStages and the great thing here is they cater for cats as well.

Toys that promote chewing also promote dental hygiene; chewing is a natural behavior in dogs of all ages. Chewing helps reduce stress in dogs and can also control barking, digging or other destructive behaviour. The key to embracing a dog's natural need to chew is to offer appropriate chew objects to help satisfy and relieve chewing urges.

Attention to dental health in cats is also an important part of their overall health especially as owners often feed their

cats soft food and treats. This means they do not get the opportunity to bite into crunchy items that can help clean away tartar build-up which can lead to dental problems.

Petstages has developed innovative Dental toys that offer dogs & cats the opportunity to crunch, chew and clean while they play.

It is a range however that I'm having difficulties finding in Australia as my regular supplier has discontinued the line. I have been able to find two retail outlets for those that are interested – one just does the dog range (http://www.d4dogz.com.au/catalog/petstages-dog-toys-c-11_239.html) whilst the other site is actually a human baby product range (<http://babynest.com.au/pet-products/>) which disappointingly does not give any worthy descriptions of the products available. I will endeavour to become a distributor myself if I can negotiate terms that will suit my micro-business (i.e. no minimum purchase)

In the mean time for those interested the toys I recommend from this range to place in the tool box of behaviour and dental health are:

Dogs: any of the Orka range – The Orka Jack always was a very popular toy when I stocked it. Clients raved about its hard wearing ability to keep the dogs entertained.



Cats: the Cat-nip filled Dental Chews, Dental mice, Plaque Away Pretzel– all three have unique netting on them that helps remove soft tartar and massages gums as cat chews. The Tons Of Tails has three different fabric varieties that encourage and assist with chewing.

And you thought you couldn't incorporate behaviour enrichment with dental health - well now you know you can!



Gillian Shippen is a veterinary nurse with a passion for enriching the lives of pets. She has her own website 'Pets Need a Life Too!' where she sells a range of enrichment toys for pets, including wheelchairs for dogs. She is always happy to advise pet owners and those in the veterinary industry on the best enrichment toys to help improve the lives of ALL pets.

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