

# Major Dog Chew Recall – Do You Give Your Dog Any of These 5 Brands?

Pet food manufacturer just voluntarily recalled 5 brands of chews sold across the US. Check for the brand names, lot codes and expiration dates here. The suspected contaminant can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs that may require veterinary intervention.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A pet food manufacturer has voluntarily recalled five types of rawhide dog chews for possible chemical contamination
- The suspected contaminant is an ammonium compound used as a "processing aid" in chews produced in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil
- Ingesting an ammonium compound can cause diarrhea and vomiting in dogs, and may require veterinary intervention
- Even high-quality rawhides can present a choking and intestinal obstruction hazard
- A better alternative to rawhides for many dogs are recreational raw bones

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published July 24, 2017.***

Recently a company called United Pet Group voluntarily recalled the following five brands of rawhide dog chews for possible chemical contamination:

- American Beefhide
- Digest-eeze
- Healthy Hide
- Healthy Hide Good-N-Fit
- Healthy Hide Good-N-Fun

The chews are sold across the U.S., and the lot codes on the packages start with AH, AV, A, AI, AO or AB. The expiration dates are from 6/01/2019 through 5/31/2020. All sizes and weights are included in the recall. If you've purchased any of these chews, you should throw them out, take them back to the store for a refund or arrange to return them to United Pet Group by calling 855-215-4962.

According to the recall notice, the suspected contaminant is an ammonium compound used as a "processing aid" in the manufacture of the chews in plants in Mexico and Colombia, and by a Brazilian supplier.<sup>1</sup> The compound is approved for use in cleaning food-processing equipment, but certainly isn't approved as an ingredient in rawhide

chews. Per the recall notice:

*"United Pet Group received very limited reports of pet illness based on the volume of possibly affected rawhide chew products manufactured and distributed. The primary complaint received from consumers was that the affected product had an unpleasant odor. Diarrhea and vomiting were also reported.*

*Exposure to quaternary ammonium compounds through direct ingestion may cause the following symptoms in dogs: reduced appetite, and gastric irritation including diarrhea and vomiting. These symptoms may require treatment by a veterinarian depending on severity."*

It's important to understand that rawhide chews, especially those manufactured outside the U.S., which are often advertised as "all-natural," are usually anything but. And they can pose a number of health problems for dogs, including choking, vomiting, diarrhea, exposure to chemical residues, salmonella poisoning and stomach torsion.

## The 411 on Rawhide Chews

Rawhide chews are the oldest chews on the market, but the name "rawhide" is technically incorrect. A more accurate term would be processed-hide, because there's nothing raw about these chews. Not only are rawhide chews often found on lists of pet poisons, they can be problematic in other ways as well. To learn more about the dark side of rawhide manufacturing, watch this video Rodney Habib and I created explaining the gory process:

Rawhides start out hard, but as your dog works the chew it becomes softer, and eventually he can untie the knots on each end and the chew takes on the consistency of a slimy piece of taffy or bubble gum. By that time your dog cannot stop chewing the thing — he's addicted.

At the point the rawhide is a slimy glob of goo, there's obviously no longer any dental benefit to it. Even worse, it has now become a choking and intestinal obstruction hazard. Once your dog has worked a rawhide chew until it's soft, I recommend you take it away and let it harden back up before offering it again.

Rawhides come in all shapes and sizes, from tiny twists to giant knotted bones. They also come all-natural, bleached (which is pure white) or basted. Rawhides that are basted or flavored have been treated with dye, coloring and probably preservatives.

If you're adamant feeding rawhides, make sure they're organic and come from U.S. animals (or other safe countries of origin, such as Canada or New Zealand), which unfortunately means they'll cost about four times as much as a bulk, non-U.S. rawhide chew. It should be manufactured in the U.S. and should not contain **added coloring, artificial flavorings or preservatives**. Make sure to read package labels.

If you have an aggressive chewer, get the biggest all-natural rawhide available. A rawhide needs to be larger than the size of your dog's head, and once the chew has been worked down to about half its original size, you should consider discarding it and getting a new one. This means you'll be wasting about half of every chew, but it's better to be safe than sorry. Better to toss out the remaining rawhide than end up at the emergency veterinary clinic because your dog has an intestinal obstruction.

## My Recommendation: Recreational Raw Bones

Since even the highest quality rawhides can present a choking hazard, and the teeth cleaning benefits of the chews are minimal, I recommend recreational raw bones instead for most (but not all) dogs. When your dog chews on a raw recreational bone, especially a meaty one with cartilage and soft tissue still attached, his teeth get the equivalent of a good brushing and flossing.

This helps break down tartar and reduces the risk of gum disease. Dogs in the wild generally have white teeth and healthy gums. This is because the prey they eat requires a lot of chewing, and the sinewy composition helps to clean each entire tooth. Dogs love to chew raw bones for the yummy taste, the mental stimulation and also because all that gnawing is great exercise for jaw muscles. There are two types of raw bones and it's important to know the difference:

- Edible raw bones are the hollow, non weight-bearing bones of birds (typically chicken wings and chicken and turkey necks). They're soft, pliable, don't contain marrow and can be easily crushed in a meat grinder. They provide calcium, phosphorus and trace minerals that can be an essential part of your dog's nutritionally balanced, fresh food diet.
- Recreational raw bones are big chunks of beef or bison femur or hipbones filled with marrow. You'll find them in the freezer section of your upscale pet store or local butcher. They don't supply significant dietary nutrition for your dog and are for gnawing only, not eating.

## Instructions for Offering Raw Recreational Bones to Your Dog

1. You should be able to find raw (not steamed, boiled, irradiated or baked) knucklebones at your local butcher shop or the meat counter of your supermarket (sometimes they're called soup bones and are in the frozen meat section). When you get the bones home, store them in the freezer and thaw them one at a time before offering them to your dog.

Don't choose bones that have been cut lengthwise, such as leg bones. Cut bones are more likely to splinter. And generally speaking, I don't recommend pork bones or rib bones, as they're more likely to splinter than other types of bones.

2. Match the bone size to your dog's head. There's really no such thing as a "too-big" bone, but there are definitely bones that are too small for some dogs. Too-small bones can be choking hazards and can also cause significant oral trauma. You may have seen online pictures of dogs getting ring bones stuck on their mandibles — those are bones that were too small and never should have been offered.

Don't give a recreational bone to a dog who's likely to try to swallow it whole or bite it in two and eat it in chunks. If your pet breaks off large pieces of raw bone, collect them before she has the opportunity to swallow them. I also recommend giving your dog a bone to chew after she's full from a meal. Hungry dogs (or dogs rarely offered bones) are more likely to swallow a bone whole or break it apart and swallow large chunks. This increases the risk of an obstruction in the digestive tract.

3. Aggressive chewers can and often do chip or fracture their teeth on raw bones, so don't give them to a dog who has had restorative dental work or crowns. Edible bones (whole or coarsely ground) can be a good alternative to recreational raw bones for aggressive chewers.

Choose non-weight bearing bones (e.g., wings, not legs). If you're concerned your dog might swallow them

whole, grip one end with pliers or a similar tool, which forces your pup to chew off bite sized pieces. You can also use a mallet to fracture the bones first, which minimizes the risk.

4. Always closely supervise your dog when he's working on a bone. Don't allow him to carry it off to a corner alone, without supervision. You want to be able to react immediately if he starts to choke, if there's a large chunk suddenly missing from the bone, or if you notice any blood on the bone or around your dog's mouth from over-aggressive gnawing.

By closely supervising him, you'll also know when your dog has chewed down to the hard brittle part of a knucklebone, making splinters more likely. If your dog tries to eat marrow bones in one sitting, he's probably not a good candidate for knucklebones because he can't discern the difference between an edible bone and a recreational bone. When the bone has been gnawed down in size, throw it out. Don't allow your dog to chew it down to a small chunk he can swallow.

5. In multi-dog households, keep the peace by separating the dogs before giving recreational bones. This rule applies to casual canine friends and BFFs as well, because recreational bones can bring out resource guarding instincts in even the most easygoing dog. Also, don't leave bones lying around the house.
6. Bone marrow is fatty and can add to your pet's daily caloric intake. Dogs with pancreatitis shouldn't eat bone marrow. Marrow can also cause diarrhea in dogs with sensitive stomachs, so I suggest scooping out the marrow until your pet's GI tract has adapted to the higher fat treat. Another alternative is to offer bones with no marrow if your dog is battling a weight problem or needs a low-fat diet. You can also replace the marrow with fat-free pumpkin and then refreeze the bones.
7. Raw bones can make quite a mess as your dog gnaws on them. That's why many people offer them outdoors or on a surface that can be easily cleaned with hot, soapy water.

## Sources and References

[Miami Herald, June 11, 2017](#)

<sup>1</sup> [FDA.gov](#)

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