

# Choosing the Right Bone or Chew for Your Pet

An all-natural bone or chew can be a source of daily enjoyment that provides benefits to both you and your pet. Because it often is a daily event, it is important to choose all-natural products such as those offered by Bravo! Here are some things to look for in selecting what to feed your pet. It is always a good practice to have your dog “earn” their treat by performing some trick or exhibiting some desirable behavior.

**Simple is better!** If your dog or cat suffers from allergies, feed an all-natural product. Avoid bones or chews with coatings or flavorings. A good quality chew, without the fake add-on coatings, or flavorings has PLENTY of pet appeal. These unnecessary add-on's are usually covering something else up. They are not necessary.

**Check the ingredients!** Be sure to check the ingredients of the product you are about to serve to be sure that it does not contain anything your dog or cat might be allergic to.

**Watch the calories!** Vary the type of bone or chew fed from day to day to provide variety and avoid feeding too many calories. A pig's ear is high in calories, as are bones with lots of calorie rich marrow, while a bully stick or one of our pure muscle meat treats (e.g. chicken or turkey breast) are lower in calories and fat.

**Leave it!** Teach “Leave it”, “Drop it” or “Give” early in your dogs upbringing so when you want them to STOP and give you back the treat, they do so promptly and without protest. Sometimes, ½ of a bully stick is plenty.

**Not every dog can have bones!** If your dog has delicate teeth which have broken while eating a bone, it is recommended you do not feed them bones. This goes for dogs who are aggressive chewers, as well, who will attempt to reduce every bone to splinters. This a potential health problem. Find other treats less likely to cause a problem.

**Size Matters!** Size of dog matters as does how aggressive a chewer they may be. So it is important to pick the right size bone or chew for the size and chewing habit of your dog. For example, in Bravo!'s product line, you might want to serve a small marrow bone to a small dog or slow chewer and the larger knuckle bones to a large dog or aggressive chewer.

**Fresh Bones Only!** Never feed a cooked bone. Serve a human grade quality fresh frozen bone. Uncooked bones are far less likely to splinter and cause digestive, blockage or intestinal problems. This is especially important for cooked poultry bones which can easily splinter and cause a problem when swallowed.

**Supervise!** Be sure to supervise your pet when they are eating a bone or chew. Watch for any problem and be ready to issue that “Leave it” command for quick retrieval. You do not need to watch every second, simply being in the general area with an occasional “how are you doing?” glance is fine.

**Keep it fresh!** Be sure to store Bravo! Bag-O-Bones products in the freezer. Do not leave them out on the counter where they might spoil. They are a fresh meat product and must be stored properly and served fresh. It's best to allow a frozen bone to defrost for a ½ hour or so before serving.

**Sniff it!** It is always a good idea to sniff test the bone or chew before serving. If it smells fresh, serve it; if it smells a bit stale, DO NOT!

**Time to train!** When it's time to train your dog, you will be using lots of appealing treats and chews to reward and reinforce the desired behavior. So choose a product like Bravo! Training treats, which are perfectly sized for multiple, heavy treating or use one of our Bravo! Bonus Bites treats which can be broken down to a smaller size if necessary. Use larger treats and chews as a BIG reward when your pet does something REALLY GOOD or performs a complex trick. Avoid using treats with grains, fillers, preservatives, high calories or treats that are greasy in your hand or pocket.

**Here is advice on how to teach Leave it! from Bravo!'s training partner [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com)  
Learn more about the clickertraining method at [clickertraining.com](http://clickertraining.com).**

"To teach leave it, you'll need a clicker, some delicious pea-sized treats (try: Bravo Buffalo Bites, Hot-Dog-Turkey Bites or Trail Mix Training Treats). Hold the Bravo! Training Treat in your fist and put it directly in front of your dog's nose. Keep the hand still and wait for the dog to stop digging, mouthing, nibbling, licking. The instant he stops investigating the hand, click and give him one of the very tasty treats. (I generally have a small bowl of the tasty treats on the counter next to me so they're easily accessible to me, but not to the dog!) Repeat offering the closed hand (with the Training Treat) and clicking the instant the dog leaves the hand alone. The dog doesn't have to leave the hand alone for a long time - in the beginning, you're going to click if the dog's nose leaves your hand even for a second and for whatever reason.

Soon enough your dog will realize that leaving the hand alone leads to getting something better and will probably not even go toward your hand when you put it out. The very first time your dog hesitates when you put your hand out, click and treat! This is exactly the behavior you're trying to get!

Once your dog is reliably leaving the hand alone (meaning he doesn't approach the closed hand when you present it), you can start raising the criteria a little bit. Now, instead of simply leaving the hand alone, you will wait for the dog to also look at you. So leaving the hand alone and looking at you is what earns the click. In short order, with your well-timed clicks, your dog will be leaving the hand alone AND looking at you!

Now that your dog is reliably leaving the hand alone and looking at you, you can begin to say "leave it," or whatever word you choose before you present your hand. It looks like this: "Leave it." Present the closed hand. Click and treat if the dog hesitates and looks at you.

Don't forget to work with things other than food, too. Your dog can learn to leave toys, other dogs, things on the sidewalk -- just about anything! Remember that the thing the dog is getting should be of higher value than the thing he's leaving alone. For instance, if I ask my dog to leave the steak that I've dropped on the floor, I'll need to find a really high value reinforcer - something a little better than that steak!

Happy training - this is a relatively easy task and one that's fun to teach.

