



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

## Canine Master on Pet Life Radio - Episode #18 Mouthing and Chewing 101

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Hi, welcome to Canine Master on Pet Life Radio. This is Chris Onthank. And today on the show we're going to talk about how to manage our dog's mouthing and chewing. You know, it's always at the top of the list for my clients - how do I stop my puppy from mouthing? So we have lots to discuss today.

So why do puppies mouth us? There's a bunch of reasons why they mouth us. Puppies explore the world through their mouths. They learn about the environment. They chew on things. They see what tastes good and they see whether it feels good.

They see the feedback that they get when they mouth something. It's completely normal for puppies to mouth just about anything. And that includes, unfortunately, all of us. Their teeth, unfortunately are very very sharp. These are those milk teeth. They're like needles clamping into your skin. And I will tell you, it is very painful. But the problem is, the puppies don't know it hurts so much. But those little milk teeth are very, very sharp and it hurts.

So what I want to do is I want to explain to you guys why this period of mouthing can be a learning experience. And if we understand what they are doing isn't meant to be hurtful, it goes a long way. So a lot of clients mistake this early mouthing. They'll tell me, they'll go, "my God, Chris, the dog's aggressive". And I'll say "no, it is not aggression. This is how the dog is exploring its world". And it's through this typical minor mouthing that a dog learns. And it maybe painful, folks. I mean, let's be honest. But it is not in most cases aggression. That is not a common thing that we see. It's rare, actually.

So here's what happens. The period between 0 to 16 weeks is the most important period of a dog's life. You know, we've talked about this before on the show. This is what we call the puppy imprint time. And during this time, this short space of time,

more than any other time in its life, he will learn the most. The things we do with this puppy could actually adversely affect how they view the world.

If we do the wrong things, we can totally mess them up. And again, go back to some of my previous shows and I talk about the importance of puppy imprint. But what today we're talking about the mouthing component.

So then what do we do? What puppy techniques can we use to control the puppy mouthing during this vital imprint time of 0 to 16 weeks? First, we need to teach the dog something which people talk about. It's called bite inhibition. Bite inhibition is sometimes referred to as how the dog learns the power of its mouth, where dogs learn to moderate the strength of their bite. You know, they clamp down. They go, "Oh, I see, I should not bite so hard". It's an important factor in socialization for all puppies to learn the power of its bite.

So how do we teach bite inhibition? Well, first of all, it's pretty cool. If you'll let your puppy play with other puppies, the puppy is going to get feedback from those other puppies. So puppy play time at a doggie daycare center or a training center where the puppies get to play with each other in a sort of a supervised group. And when I say puppies get to play with each other, it's puppies of the right size, puppies of the right temperament. You don't want to put a big roughhousing dog with a small little timid puppy. So you better have somebody know how to determine which puppies your puppy should play with because the wrong puppy could really mess up this imprint time.

But during this imprint time, puppy socialization, the puppy actually learns the power of its own mouth and they learn this through feedback. So again, the period between 0 to 16 weeks is the best time for the puppy to learn. They're like little sponges and each imprint is very important. They learn from socializing at this time more than any other time, is what I was saying before. So if a puppy's too hard with her mouth with another puppy, the other puppy will yelp usually. And this teaches that the puppy that it's biting too hard that he'd better control his bite, that he's actually hurting.

So a puppy that's mouthing another puppy, you'll hear them yelp and it's OK for the puppy to yelp. We want the puppy to give that other puppy feedback. Now, if they're more insistent about their mouthing, like they start going crazy and they make unwanted advances towards another puppy and they start mouthing in a hard way, you might hear the other puppy start to growl or he might even snap or try to get aggressive towards that puppy. This is also great feedback. The puppy is telling them, "hey, this is not OK with me. Back off, buster". So that's what the puppies are doing. Puppies at this age are so moldable and hungry to learn the rules of their own environment.

So there's no better way to learn bite inhibition than in a puppy play supervised environment. So the good news is we also can use these instinctual laws of puppy play in our own families - with your kids and with each other to teach our pups not to mouth us. Well, not to mouth us in a hard way that hurts. Do any of you have a puppy or an older dog in the house? Well, let me tell you, this is also a great way for the dog to get feedback.

So if you have an older dog, maybe your older dog will teach your new puppy the boundaries that it's not okay to mouth them so hard. And usually this happens with a guttural tone or a snap, which teaches the puppy that this is totally unacceptable. You know, I always say if you have an older dog that can teach your puppy not to mouth them, then I bet you could teach them not to mouth you too, just from feedback. So the secret is we can as humans teach your puppy bite inhibition and to stop mouthing.

So we are going to go through all the steps. How do we address puppy mouthing? Here are the steps. All right. So here are the do's. We'll do the do's first. And we're not going to do the don'ts. We'll do those a little bit. All right. So here are the do's.

If a puppy is mouthing you, the best thing you can do is give him verbal feedback. So I always say go like, awwwwww, ouch. We must give the pup verbal feedback that their mouths are an unwelcome component as they're mouthing us. And we're giving them feedback and that depends on the power of their mouth that the dog is applying. So if the puppy is mouthing you in a minor way, what we're gonna do is, we're just going to redirect that mouthing.

But if a puppy bites hard, you want to say ouch, ouch. Now, the interesting thing is, if you are your dog's leader and we've talked about that on previous shows. Things that make you into a leader is not being mean to your dog, but having your dog see you as dominant in the space, winning elevated areas, going first - all those things that we talked about, in previous shows. Leadership must be going on here for the right relationship to manifest itself and for the puppy to learn. So you can yelp like a puppy would, replicating the feedback from another dog, letting your pup know that they've hurt you. And your dog, if he sees you in that way of being his leader, he's going to actually respond better than if you're just a sibling. So again, giving that dog feedback is really good.

The other thing we can do is we can redirect them toward another object. So if I have a puppy that's mouthing my arm, what I'll quickly do is grab like a tug toy or a ball or a squeaky toy. And I'll actually squeak the squeaky toy or the tug toy and encourage him to go on to that object. So this is what we call redirecting the puppy on to something else. Again, redirecting - we ignore minor mouthing and we redirect it. But if it starts to hurt, we give feedback. So you see, it's really important to what you do to allow minor mouthing and minor mouthing is really OK but we just don't

want to encourage it. So again, I would just redirect it onto an object. And if they're really hurting, you give that feedback.

But puppies need the mouth so don't expect to stop it altogether. It's just not realistic. You know, puppies will mouth. That's how they explore their world. But teaching them where it is acceptable and where it isn't is your job as your puppy's new companion.

All right. OK, the next thing you can do is use a guttural tone. And again, a guttural tone given to your puppy tells him to knock it off. It doesn't matter what you say.

You know, I always say peanut butter and jelly - doesn't matter. It's the guttural tone. It doesn't matter the words that you're using. But a guttural tone is an instinctual warning to your pet. And basically, when you give it a guttural tone, what you're saying to your puppy is, "hey, knock that off. That hurt and if you keep on going, I'm going to get aggressive". Now, what does that really mean? You're really not gonna get aggressive but it's an instinctual warning. Your pups don't know the word "no" or "stop it". "No". What does that mean? Blah, blah, blah, blah. They don't know the word "no". But if you combine the word "no" with a guttural tone, now that actually starts to mean something. And then we can redirect them to a toy. And when we do redirect them to a toy, then what happens, we can give them praise. You know, we can say, "oh, that's the right thing to do".

All right. So let's say that the guttural tone is not working, the ouch feedback doesn't work to begin with. And we progressed to the guttural tone. So now what do we do? The puppy's still mouthing. And again, folks, you are going to have puppies who mouth. It's fun for them to mouth. It feels good on their teeth. And we'll talk about that in a moment.

So a water bottle, a squirt water bottle. So when I say a squirt water bottle, nothing in there but plain old water. I sometimes go down to Home Depot and get their plant mister bottles and turn the nozzle to its actual stream. So that's a squirt water bottle. And again, I've said this in the past, put "water only" so that everybody knows not to put ammonia or a cleaner in there - water only. Only use this water bottle, put it on a table or are close by. But again, don't walk around with the water bottle in your hand because then the dog will only not mouth you with the water bottle in your hand. So what we do is we have to have a word, a marker that means the water bottle is going to come. So we use the water bottle and we squirt the dog on the top of the head and near the ears and not in the face. I can tell you, you can try it in the face. But what will happen is your dog will start biting at the water and think it's a game, especially those Labrador retrievers. I've seen them with Portuguese Water Dogs. They just think that's the biggest fun thing going. So top of the head and the ears. Squirt, squirt, squirt, squirt, squirt is the punisher. But remember, the best time to correct them is when they're in the act or even better is when they're thinking about it.

When a dog's in the midst of mouthing, you want to have a marker. And what I usually use as a marker, I'll say "enough" or "no bites" or some appropriate word like that. I want to make sure it's the same word every time so everybody in the family is going to know what word to use. So let's say I got to say the word "enough". So I have the water bottle sitting on the kitchen table. I'm in the kitchen and the puppy starts to grab onto my leg and he's biting hard and I go ahhh ahhh – doesn't stop, guttural tone, nothing's working. So now I might go "enough" and then I reach over, grab the squirt water bottle, go over to him, squirt him about six to eight squirts on top of the head and the ears. He's going to get doused, folks, but that's OK. Squirt, squirt, squirt. And then I put the water bottle down.

And when he stops, "good boy". And then I redirect him onto something else. Again, give him a squeaky toy, something to chew, a tug toy. And it's okay to play tug with your puppy. Some people think does that encourage mouthing? As long as you focus on the object and you don't let it migrate onto your arm. So tug does not necessarily encourage mouthing. And again, some of the best agility dogs out there and search rescue dogs get a nice tug at the end as a reinforcer as long as you keep it on the toy and it doesn't migrate on to your body parts.

So the spray bottle with feedback really, really works. When they stop, again when they're chewing something appropriate - "Oh, what a good boy. Chuckles what a good boy you are." High-pitched praise tone "Oh, what a good boy. See, that's fun". And so what you're doing is you're shaping the behavior using tones. You could use the "enough" and the squirt water bottle. And then when a dog is chewing on something appropriate and not mouthing on your skin and ripping into it, you give a nice "Oh, what a good boy" and you encourage that using your praise. The timing of that should be right on. In other words, you want to praise them when they're in the midst of doing it and not after they've stopped chewing on the appropriate toy.

All right. So now let's say the squirt water bottle does not work. Sometimes you get puppies going bananas at about, I don't know why but it's right around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. A lot of times it's right after you fed them. They got all this pent up energy. You know, you're supposed to feed puppies three times a day. Sometimes they get what we call the puppy crazies. And that happens towards the end of the day. I don't know. It's almost like a sugar buzz. But you know it's like a sugar buzz like kids and you'll see these puppies start mouthing and biting and woof and woof and back and forth and going into play posture and all these things. And oh, my God, the dog looks like he's getting crazy and he starts biting you and stops and biting you and you'll see him do this with kids and you as well.

And when the puppy starts biting hard or gets out of control, like, oh, my God, the squirt water bottle is not working. My guttural tone is not working. You know, at this point, I might use something which we call in behaviorism - called negative reinforcement. We basically are going to take something away that the dog likes.

When the dog is having a blast in that mode, in that sort of puppy crazy mode, he's biting you hard. And you could do this not even in the puppy crazy mode. It could be just when the puppy is really biting hard. So to be clear, it's not just to be used at that crazy time. It can be used anytime the puppy is biting so hard that you can't handle it.

So what you're gonna do is you're going to remove him from the situation and put him out on a time out, sort of like what we did with our little kids. We put them on time outs. Not that I ever had a time out when I was a little kid. I got the old here comes the wooden spoon. But anyway, that's another whole story.

All right. So here we got a crate. We can use a crate as a timeout. We can use a laundry room as a timeout. Now, some people say, oh, don't use a crate as a punishment. Listen, you're not using a crate as a punishment. You're putting the dog away from the environment that he wants to be in and you're giving him a timeout. When I put my kid on a timeout in his bedroom, he doesn't hate his bedroom after that. OK, so don't worry about using the crate as a place to use timeout. And what I do is I use the crate and I'll put a blanket sometimes over it to make it dark. So has literally no visual stimulation and he's alone. That's the consequence.

But you have to do the following. You have to mark it when he's doing it. So I might go. This is how I generally do it when the dog starts mouthing. I'll go. "That's it". And then I will take the puppy by the collar and I'll do what we call a verbal bridge. So a verbal bridge is like a verbal banter. I'll go. "No, no, no, no, no, no, no" as I guide him to the crate. I'll stick him in the crate. Shut the door. Put the blanket over the crate. And now he's all alone. So you know, what happens is that the dog ties in the behavior with the consequence. Because you have that verbal bridge or verbal banter to the crate. I'll leave him in the crate for like ten to fifteen minutes. When he's OK, I'll let him out. If he starts in again. I'll do it again. "That's it. No, no, no, no, no, no". To the crate and shove him in there. And that's it.

And it works really well. So negative reinforcement using the verbal bridge is a great technique. And I would actually do that as the last resort. That's sort of like, OK, this isn't working, but you will find that it works really, really well for dogs that start to get more severe. So this is really important about the mouthing. You know, when I was growing up if a dog put its mouth on any person, we would correct them and sometimes we'd be a little snap on his nose. I watched my grandmother do that little smack. And, you know what happens is, is that the dogs wouldn't put their mouths on anybody.

But when they started to play with kids or in the neighborhood, when they did this mouthing, they didn't know the power of their mouth. So this teaching this bite inhibition actually is much safer than teaching the dog to never put its mouth on anybody because a dog will not know the power of its mouth. And you want your

puppy to know the power of its mouth. OK, so if they don't know the power of its mouth, this is where dogs might do a mouthing and they actually bite hard and break skin. And this can be dangerous.

So, this is my list of what you should do.

Now let's go onto my list of what you should not do. All right. Some people say to me, Chris, you know, I got this bitter apple. You know, bitter apple was made by a company called Grannick's out of Greenwich, Connecticut here in Fairfield County and near New York City. Grannick's came up with this apple spray that we put on objects or clothing so that the dog would grab this bitter apple and he'd have a negative experience. The problem is, I see that this bitter apple spray generally does not work. They have a spray and I think they also have a cream. The problem is that some dogs actually like it. I've seen it. So if you really wanted to make it work.

I'm going to tell you a technique that I'm actually apprehensive about telling you - this technique. All right. I've got to tell you. But I don't recommend it. But just in case you're using the bitter apple, you think that this isn't working. Here's a technique. But I caution you to use this technique. If you really want to know, the best way is that you have to have a miserable imprint of the bitter apple.

So what we do is we take the dog, we open up his mouth and we go squirt, squirt a couple of squirts in the mouth. And he will just be like, yeah, He will have this sour face and he will hate that taste. And then the next time he goes near it, he just tastes that bitter apple on anything. He will feel like, oh, that was that terrible taste. Yeah. Negative imprint. He'll hate it and he won't want to do it. That works. But you know, the thing about Bitter Apple is if your dog is chewing a lot of stuff and a lot of things and furniture and things.

What I would do is, is get him more appropriate toys and bones and Kong's and things to chew and guide him towards those things and supervise him and use your verbal corrections, guttural tones when he's on something he shouldn't be chewing, especially your own hands or body.

Here's another don't, so many people think that grabbing the dog by the snout and squeezing is going to make the dog stop biting? It actually has the opposite effect. There's something in a puppy or all dogs that is called opposition reflex. And a lot of people have it. A lot of animals have it. You push against a horse. The horse pushes back against you. You squeeze a dog's mouth shut. When you let go, he reopens the mouth and reclaims on. That's a natural opposition reflex. So the minute you let go, that dog's going to re bite you. So that doesn't work by holding the mouth of the dog shut.

Another don't is don't pull your hand away and create a tug of war effect when the

dog is mouthing you. Try to be calm and try to redirect him. This only gives him that tug of war game when you're pulling away and he starts to like it. A dog should remove its mouth from you, not the other way around. You should not be pulling it out. Try to be still. Teach your children to be still with their dog and not to scream and yell. That's another thing we can talk about.

Another don't is. And this is probably the most dangerous of it all. I've seen people do this. And I actually have a veterinarian here in Fairfield County that keeps me in business with aggression cases. What he does is that he teaches his veterinarian puppy clients to take the puppy and to roll him on his back and hold him down. It's something called the alpha roll. Joe Bevan's of the Monks of New Skete, actually came up with this technique in his first book, The Monks of New Skete but he actually reversed it years later before he passed away. This is a really bad thing to do.

Holding a dog on his back and holding him down makes the dog defensive, makes a dog not trust you and makes the dog start to think that you're trying to kill him. So there's not a dog in the world that walks up to another dog and rolls him on his back. The dog that rolled on his back did so voluntarily. All right. So that alpha roll that you read in that old issue of Monks of New Skete, throw that book away. Get the new one if you have to. But the alpha roll is just a wrong thing to do.

All right. Here's another don't, don't roughhouse with your dog. I know it's so much fun. If you're going to roughhouse, roughhouse with that tug toy or a ball or squeaky toy. But you know, the people that take their hands and unfortunately as guys are they're probably a worse one at this.

I see this all time. We start slapping the dog in the face with our hands. They try to get them to mouth us. This is just the wrong thing to be doing. It encourages mouthing. It encourages dogs to start mouthing and using their mouth on you. So don't do that because it might be fun for you but now the dog starts to think that he could do this with everybody. It really backfires. I can't tell you how many times this causes severe issues later on. So don't roughhouse. And girls, if your boyfriend or your husband is doing this with a dog, tell him that Canine Master says, knock it off. All right. It's not a good idea.

All right. And here's the last. Absolutely don't ever, ever, ever, ever smack or hit your dog. Don't swat him with a newspaper. Oh, my gosh. That's a terrible thing. Hitting your dog makes your dog defensive. And hitting your dog always, always, makes your dog not trust you. And you know what? It will backfire on you big time. I can't tell you how many times in my career that I've seen a person hit a dog and the dog actually goes right after them later on. So don't hit your dog. OK.

This has all been applicable to a puppy. You know, mouthing, I would say goes up to



six months where they're mouthing and they're learning. But many of you have that adolescent pup sort of like six months to a year, that obnoxious teenager time. And a lot of you will say, well, you know, what can I do about this? Well, the adolescent dog becomes a mouther because he's about 6 months old. And at about 6 months old his teeth, his permanent teeth are now coming in. They're in. But they're also the pulp, which is on the inside, is that it's the meaty part of the tooth is actually getting smaller and smaller and smaller. And as the what we call the enamel is actually closing in. And as it starts to close in and that pulp becomes a little sliver. What your gonna find is, is that the dogs will start chewing up things. It's almost like baby's teething. They got to chew on something. So they'll start ripping holes in your walls and ripping up the sofa and destroying your cabinetry and your molding. And, you know, this is the primary reason is because the dog's enamel is growing in and that pulp is getting smaller.

So what you need to do in this situation, you guys, is you need to get the dog entertained. So what I would tell you to do is this - go get a Kong, a tug toy or a chew toy from your friendly pet store. Ask them what they have as far as toys that entertain them. Toys that put dogs on variable schedules. Those cubes that when the dog rolls, that they come out. A cold washcloth - take a washcloth or a dog toy. Soak in the water. Stick that in the freezer. That's sometimes really helps dogs that are mouthing.

Now, if the kids are running around and they're screaming and yelling and the dog is chasing them, here's another thing. A lot of times dogs will run after them and mouth them. But that's not the kind of mouthing I'm just talking about here. The mouthing I was talking about here is just sort of like their mouth is hurting them and they start to get destructive. But again, if you have kids that are screaming and yelling in your backyard, your kids are becoming that chew toy. So basically, that's not a great idea to encourage as well. A good idea here is to make your own game and redirect the fun that they're having biting the kids onto an object. Squeaky balls, tug toys start and end that behavior. Use that negative reinforcement there as well. So I go outside and the dog starts getting crazy. Starts mouthing me and back and playing play bow. I might go, "that's it" and walk inside and shut the door. Now the dog went, "hey, that's no fun. As soon as I started to get crazy, the game ended". Again that's negative reinforcement and that works really well. A water bottle works well with adolescent dogs as well. And the same technique. "Enough", grab the squirt water bottle, six, eight squirts, top of the head and the ears and the dog's not going to like that.

There's another time with dogs will use their mouth. It's when you come home. Have you ever seen that dog that when when you walk in the door after work and the dog puts his mouth on you or puts his mouth on your friend? Well, what this dog is doing is this dog is actually showing the power of him and his mouth on you and on your friend. That is not a good thing. And you may want to get some help with a canine behavior for that. Basically, that dog has a relationship on with you that you are its

puppy. So you want to change the way the dog sees you and be more of his leader, his guide or whatever you want to call it.

There's another thing that you can see dogs do. And I see this a lot is dogs do what we call the corn on the cob. It's almost like they nibble on your skin. The teeth are barely missing and it's like they're going up and down. That's corn on the cob. And it feels, you can feel the dog's teeth, but not necessarily the pressure. And this type of mouthing is definitely a behavioral issue. This dog is showing his power on you and it's not something you want to encourage. This is not typical mouthing. And again, you would probably benefit from sessions with a behaviorist of some sort or a dog trainer. Anything else would just be a band-aid. And I could not. It could probably make matters worse. So get yourself some help if your dog is doing that kind of mouthing.

All right Jamie. So I guess we have some questions from our listeners.

**Jaimee:** First one is Alan from New York. Hi Chris. We just got a new puppy springer spaniel. He's three months and the kids are now afraid of him because his mouthing is so out of control. His teeth are so sharp and he's constantly mouthing them. What I hoped would be a great experience for the kids is turning out to be very traumatic. Any advice on how to get through this period and how long it will last.

**Chris:** All right. You know Alan this is something I hear all the time. We get a puppy. The puppy starts he seems really calm that first day when he's eight weeks old. And then all of a sudden all hell breaks loose and the puppy starts biting your kids, your kids start to become scared because it hurts - those milk teeth are chomping in. They start to scream and yell and the puppy starts getting more excited and he starts to mouth them even more. So this is actually a really tough thing. Here's what I'm going to tell you.

When you have a puppy that's doing this that negative reinforcement or the squirt water bottle may be a good technique. But we also got to train our kids. If they scream and yell and run away, they're actually encouraging this kind of behavior. So they need to be quiet if they can. They need to stay still. They need to say "hey mom, hey dad, Chompers is chomping me and it's hurting" and you need to remove the dog from that experience and again redirect him onto something else.

I will tell you this period will pass. I would make sure that the puppy at this stage is only around your kids, your small kids, when you are home and supervising. The worst thing that can happen is that this happens when you're not home and you're not watching. So it's a period that happens I would say it starts to stop at around 6 months thereabouts and it will subside. And if your kids can be mature enough and you can sort of say listen you guys put on long pants, don't have the shirt, the short sleeves. And what happens is that will protect them a little bit. Don't scream and

yell, don't freak out, try to be calm and redirect them onto an object. That's what I would tell you. And in the meantime, make sure that you as the adults are around your children when they're around the puppy.

**Jaimee:** OK. Next Lisa from Rhode Island. Hi Chris. We just rescued a lab mix puppy from a local shelter and we are in love with her. However, we were not prepared for the amount of mouthing and biting and want to have the right things for her to chew on. What are some of the best and safest toys for her to chew on that will occupy her for a long time? What toys are best now and as gets older? There's so much to choose from.

**Chris:** Yeah there are and so going down to your favorite pet store and talking to the people there and seeing there's a lot of great toys out there. One of the best ones is of course the Kong. Kong makes a lot of great great toys out there. There's the Kong, the rubber Kong. And you can get it, the black I think is the hardest, the toughest. But depending on your breed you can get different sizes. And what I do is, I will take I'll take some cheese wiz or I'll take some peanut butter mixed in with their kibble. I'll stick it in the freezer and I'll freeze it overnight. And then I'll let the puppies sort of work on that. That's a great great occupier of chewing and mouthing and the puppy will be redirected on that.

You can also get some Nyla bones which are good. There's these new smart bones that I hear are very good. There's also sort of squeaky toys but those tend to be chewed up pretty quickly but just tougher ones and more durable ones. There's a toy that I was involved with years ago called Wubba Wubba. I was involved in developing that and that's actually distributed by Kong. That's a great durable toy.

And you know with all toys I want to be really clear, make sure you supervise your dog around any chew toy because just because they're a dog chew toy doesn't mean that your dog can't ingest them. And when puppies ingest small pieces of fabric it goes into their intestines and bad things can happen. Emergency surgeries and things like that. So anything you're going to give your dog, make sure you're supervising him during that time, especially puppies that tend to ingest things.

So those are great great things. Another one you could do as I mentioned it earlier in the show is you can take a washcloth or a fabric toy. You can soak it in water and stick it in the freezer and that's actually really good. It softens up as they chew it. And that works really well. So these are the kinds of things you can do and they work really well.

As far as live dog bone, you know dog bones from live animals. You know I would be cautious of those. Dogs can have bad responses. Something about animal carcasses can make some dogs get a little crazy. It can sort of turn on their instinctual possessiveness. And I have seen dogs actually seem to become a little

bit aggressive and object guard over those issues. So I would stay away from those things and I would try to use the chew toys that I just mentioned. Jamie just asked me what about bully sticks and rawhide. And again pigs ears, bully sticks, rawhide, under supervision, yes. If your dog starts to get possessive of those things, I wouldn't use them because some dogs will start to get possessive And it brings out those aggressive instincts to possess. So under supervision fine but really make sure again that the parts don't get really small because they can swallow those things and they can get lodged in their intestines as well. And unless you have a great relationship with a veterinarian, those \$3,000 operations of removing part of the intestine is a killer. So I wouldn't do those. All right.

**Jaimee:** OK. Last question. Robert from Virginia. Hi Chris. Can you give me some insight on how to tell the difference from typical puppy mouthing and something more serious like aggressive mouthing. My puppy's five months and very mouthy and will bite my pant leg with a couple of grumbling noises and I don't know if I should be worried or if it's just typical play.

**Chris:** So here's the thing Robert. A lot of puppies when they grab on your pant leg, you'll hear this noise and a lot of you will go, "Oh my God he's growling". Well this is not aggression. This is tug of war and the puppy is trying to make himself look bigger and be bigger. And a lot of times puppies that growl are actually just insecure. OK you know in the sport of Schutzhund when we play tug of war, we're testing a puppy for police work. A puppy that growls during the tug test - we usually test them at about 42 to 50 days. A puppy that growls, generally that's a puppy that's insecure and not good for protection work. So a puppy that's growling is just being a little bit insecure. It doesn't mean that he's aggressive. I want to be very clear.

Now if a puppy is growling at you, not playing tug of war, but just starts growling at you over an object or you pick him up and he turns quickly to bite you. You'll know the difference. It's very obvious. It's a sudden snap that's a baring of the teeth. It may be accompanied with a growl or a sort of a belly growl and a lot of times, I have a puppy now that I'm working with the client, when the puppy is picked up and he's picked up, he's startled, he'll react and go to bite. That's different than the mouthing that we're talking about. So that's why I'm seeing that puppy.

So what I would tell you is that a mouthing puppy - you'll know he's playing. He's having fun, he's going into play posture, he's maybe wagging his tail and his ears are back and he's not looking like he's scared. A puppy that is snapping and it's a fast snap. A puppy that is baring his teeth. Those are puppies that we want to get checked out by behaviorist or a dog trainer with a lot of experience with puppies and reading dogs.

So here's the thing. If you really don't know what you're looking at, it's better to get

an opinion and spend a little bit of money on a private lesson and get an evaluation than to say oh well... he's just... and don't come up with an excuse for aggression because the best time to fix puppy aggression is during imprint time. So if there is anything like that, that's the best time between about 5 to 16 weeks. That's the time to fix it. So if you have any doubts, go find yourself a canine behaviorist or a dog trainer that has a lot of experience and say "what am I seeing here - is this aggression or not?" And if it is aggression, it doesn't mean it can't be fixed. It just means that you've got to deal with it with the right team around you.

OK, well that's it for today. And I really hope that you found our show on mouthing to be interesting and I would love to know your comments and for you also to join our conversation. Visit us at [caninemaster.com](http://caninemaster.com) and let me know how it's going with your puppy and how the mouthing is going. And if you have any questions on mouthing, send me your videos and photos so I can see what's going on with your dog and I'll help you solve the problems if I can. So goodbye for now and see you next time on Canine Master on Pet Life Radio where I will continue to help you master the relationship with your dog.

Bye for now.