

# **Pet Health Articles & Alerts**

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## **PET HEALTH ALERT – October 22, 2008**

### **Rawhide Chips for Dogs Recalled by Hartz Mountain**

*The Hartz Mountain Corporation Voluntarily Recalls One Specific Lot of Nationwide Chicken-Basted Rawhide Chips Because of Possible Health Risk*

October 22, 2008 – The Hartz Mountain Corporation, Secaucus, NJ is voluntarily recalling one specific lot of Hartz Chicken-Basted Rawhide Chips due to concerns that one or more bags within the lot are potentially contaminated with Salmonella. Hartz is fully cooperating with the US Food and Drug Administration in this voluntary recall.

Salmonella can cause serious infections in dogs, and, if there is cross-contamination caused by handling of the rawhide chips, in people as well, especially children, the aged, and people with compromised immune systems. Healthy people potentially infected with Salmonella should monitor themselves for some or all of the following symptoms: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or bloody diarrhea, abdominal cramping and fever. On rare occasions, Salmonella can result in more serious ailments, including arterial infections, endocarditis, arthritis, muscle pain, eye irritation, and urinary tract symptoms. Consumers exhibiting these signs after having contact with this product should contact their healthcare providers.

Pets with Salmonella infections may be lethargic and have diarrhea or bloody diarrhea, fever, and vomiting. Some pets will have only decreased appetite, fever and abdominal pain. Animals can be carriers with no visible symptoms and can potentially infect other animals or humans. If your pet has consumed the recalled product and has these symptoms, please contact your veterinarian.

The product involved is 4,850 – 2 pound plastic bags of Hartz Chicken-Basted Rawhide Chips, lot code JC23282, UPC number 3270096463 which were distributed to a national retail customer. While the normal testing that Hartz conducts through an independent outside laboratory did not detect the presence of Salmonella in any Hartz rawhide products, sample testing conducted by another laboratory did indicate the presence of the bacteria in a sample bag of the Chicken-Basted Rawhide Chips. Hartz is aggressively investigating the difference in test results and the potential source of the problem.

Although Hartz has not received any reports of animals or humans becoming ill as a result of coming into contact with this product, Hartz is taking immediate steps to remove the product from all retail stores and distribution centers. Dog owners who purchased this product should check the lot code on their bag, and, if the code is not visible, or if the bag has lot code JC23282 imprinted thereon, they should immediately discontinue use of the product and discard it in a proper manner.

## **Lotte USA, Inc. Initiates Nationwide Recall of Koala's March Creme filled Cookies**

October 17, 2008 — Lotte USA, Inc., Battle Creek, MI initiated a recall of all Koalas' March Cookies on September 29, 2008 because they were produced in China and they may be contaminated with **melamine**. The products are packaged in a plastic overwrap and the recall includes the following products:

Koala March King Size Chocolate 1.8 oz 50 grams  
UPC 0 81900 00001 7

Koala March King Size Strawberry 1.8 oz/50 grams  
UPC 0 81900 00007 9

Koala March King Size White Chocolate 1.8 oz/50 grams  
UPC 0 81900 00011 6

Koala March Family Pack Chocolate 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08001 9

Koala March Family Pack Strawberry 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08002 6

Koala March Family Pack White Chocolate 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08011 8

Koala March Family Pack Chestnut 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08010 1

Koala March Family Hawaii Chocolate 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08003 3

Koala March Family Hawaii Pineapple 9.5 oz/270 grams  
UPC 0 81900 08004 0

The product were distributed nationwide and to Canada through wholesale distributors and retail stores. Lotte USA, Inc. is not aware of any illnesses or injuries associated with these products.

Individuals who have experienced any health problems after consuming the Koala March cookies are advised to contact their health care professional.

Customers who have purchased Koala's March cookies are urged to return them to the place of purchase for a full refund or discard it in their trash. Consumers with questions may contact the company at (269) 963-6664, Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 5:00 Eastern Standard Time.

## Thinking About Adopting a Pet?

Thinking about acquiring a new pet? A pet is a commitment for 10 – 20 years, and the decision to bring one into your home and life should not be made lightly, or on the spur of the moment. Acquiring a pet for the wrong reasons, or bringing home the wrong type of pet for your lifestyle or environment, is a common mistake that often leads to the pet being given up. Most animals that are brought to shelters end up being destroyed. Many people start with good intentions, but do not think about the almost certain fate for the pet if ‘it doesn’t work out’.

So, how can you be sure you are ready for the commitment of a new pet? As with most decisions in life, knowledge is the key to making the best decision you can. Start by asking yourself some basic questions.

1. Does everyone in the household want a pet, or is the pet going to be source of argument?
2. Is everyone ready and able to share in the responsibility, or is just one person going to end up doing all the work?
3. Do you travel or work long hours, leaving little time to spend with a pet?
4. Do you have the disposable income to afford a pet?

By answering the questions above honestly, you are taking the initial steps to responsible pet ownership. For instance, being able to afford a pet is not enough. Most behavior problems that arise in pets are created by the pet owners. Behavior is one of the top reasons listed for giving a pet up to a shelter. If you don’t have the time to spend with a pet, and you do not properly train a pet, the animal becomes, bored, frustrated, or confused as to what you want, and reacts in a manner the owner considers as “problem behavior”.

Conversely, having all the time in the world to spend with your pet, is not enough to be a responsible pet owner. You have to be able to afford your pet too. In addition to the cost of food and supplies, are you able to spend, on average, a couple hundred dollars a year in basic health care for your pet? Are you aware that, barring accident or disease, the first year of your pet’s life will cost more than the next few years? New pets, or puppies and kittens, need a series of vaccinations, and should be spayed or neutered. Your new pet may come with an existing parasite infection, a skin condition, or an infectious disease that needs treatment. A new pet comes with expenses that some people find themselves not prepared for.

The following link is to a pet vaccination guide posted on the internet in “The Pet Care Forum”. I think this particular guide is useful as it contains up to date information, contains general information that is not regionally specific, and does not endorse a particular brand or special interest group. Use of this link to *Vaccination Policy*, by Wendy C. Brooks, DVM, DABVP, is for information purposes only, and does not imply Dr. Brooks’ endorsement of any opinions in this article.

Click here:

<http://www.vin.com/PetCare/Articles/VetHospital/M00608.htm#Dogs>

Remember that puppies and kittens will require a series of vaccinations to stimulate a long lasting, protective response from their developing immune systems.

All new pets should receive a complete physical exam, and be checked for parasites. New dogs should be checked for heartworm disease if older than six months, and dogs and cats should be started on heartworm prevention. All pets should be spayed or neutered as soon as possible. Many veterinarians are now proficient in pediatric anesthesia and sterilization, and the procedure can be done as early as 8 weeks of age by an experienced practitioner.

Maybe you are already a pet owner, and are planning to bring an additional pet into the household. You should still talk to your veterinarian, and local obedience trainer, prior to bringing the new pet home. Your veterinarian can review the immunization records of your current pets, and advise you of any boosters that may be recommended prior to exposure to a new pet. You may be able to arrange for the new pet to go immediately to your veterinarian's hospital or clinic for an exam prior to bringing the animal home. Your new pet may be carrying a respiratory infection such as kennel cough, or parasites such as ear mites or intestinal worms. Exposing your existing pets to these health problems, while probably not life threatening, can be costly. Financially it can be costly when you end up treating all your pets in the household for an infection the new pet brought home. But it can also be costly in terms of emotional stress for you, and suffering for your pets that become infected.

Your local obedience trainer can discuss with you the problems that may be unique to bringing an additional pet into your household. An expert in animal behavior and training can discuss with you how to properly introduce a new pet to your home, what to look for as signs of trouble, and how to avoid common behavior problems.

A pet can be a wonderful addition to anyone's life. A pet can be a trusted companion, a part of the family. A source of joy and love for years to come, a pet can be the one exception to that old saying "money can't buy love." But make the decision wisely. Make the decision as a family. Discuss basic health care with your local veterinarian in advance. Find an obedience trainer in your area and get their recommendations before you bring your new pet home. Remember that once you give your pet up to a shelter, its chances of getting another home are pretty small. Do everything you can to make your decision to acquire a new pet, the right decision.

## **Benefits of Doggie Day Care**

Daycare for dogs is becoming more and more popular across the nation. The daycare facilities range from very small 1,200 sq ft facilities to expansive warehouse facilities, to indoor/outdoor facilities, some of which have multiple acres for the dogs to run. Fees range according to the size of the facility, the services offered, and geography. Orange County, California has an average per day fee of \$35.00, while Orange County, FL has an average of \$18.00 per day. Many facilities also offer pick up and drop off services for those pet owners who must be at work before or after the facility opens or closes.

Dog daycare is an excellent way to exercise dogs, especially large dogs. Many dogs whose owners work full time are cooped up most of the day. Some of these dogs are in a crate all day. Then when the owner arrives home, exercise can be as little as a brief walk outside to eliminate. Lack of exercise can lead to obesity, lack of overall fitness, mental boredom, and behavior issues.

A dog that has spent 8 hours playing with other dogs comes home exhausted. A tired dog, like a tired child, goes to bed without a fuss and sleeps through the night. This avoids the dog “bothering” the owner continuously asking to play, and the owner becoming frustrated, or ignoring the dog. This can also prevent some problem behaviors that arise from boredom and excess energy.

Dogs that are introduced at a young age to dog daycare have better social skills. These dogs learn how to interact with other dogs. Normal dogs that regularly attend dog daycare view most other dogs as playmates, until the other dog signals otherwise.

Additionally, dogs that regularly attend daycare learn independence from their owner. These dogs are exposed to other humans, and can become less likely to view strangers as a threat. Also, normal dogs may be less likely to develop separation anxiety.

Dogs that are exposed to multiple environments, and many social situations, tend to handle new situations in a more confident manner.

Many daycare facilities also offer 24 hour daycare, or overnight boarding. This is an excellent option for pet owners as the dog already associates the facility with good things. Leaving the pet overnight is less traumatic for the dog, and the owner. The pet is exhausted after playing all day, and falls asleep more easily than when being boarded in a typical boarding kennel. The owner feels less guilty about leaving the dog at that facility knowing this. Also, dogs often get couches to sleep on at night, in their own room, rather than being caged. All this is much more positive for the owner as well as the dog.

Another nice service some facilities offer is the ability for the owner to check in on their dog by going to the web site and viewing live action video via webcams. Whether an owner is at work, or on vacation across the country, the owner can see their dog and be assured their pet is OK by going to the daycare’s website.

All these aspects of daycare for dogs help the owner form a stronger bond with their pet because the pet causes fewer “problems” for them, and is “less work without the guilt”. The dogs go to sleep when they get home, and the owner feels they have done a good thing for their dog. This is

a positive feeling instead of the owner getting frustrated with the dog because all it wants to do is play and the owner is tired from work and wants to be left alone.

Dog daycare can also be a form of social interaction for the human. A dog daycare may have birthday parties for the dogs celebrating birthdays during the month. Dogs develop dog friendships that can lead to play dates set up by the owners. Daycares often have pet of the month contests, and many offer training classes, flyball, and agility. These are all ways the owners can interact with other pet owners, while the dog is also benefiting.

**There are things to watch out for, however.** The wrong daycare can lead to serious behavior problems or injury. Owners should tour the daycare and watch the staff interacting with the pets. The following items should be noted:

- Is there a staff person watching each group of dog's playing?
- Does the staff person stop dogs whose interactions are getting out of hand?
- Does the staff person clean up immediately after a dog has eliminated? Are the dogs separated into groups based on their preferences (who gets along) rather than just size?
- If dogs spend time outdoors, are they rotated inside to cool down?
- Is there shade provided outside?
- Adequate water?
- Supervision outside?
- Is there adequate supervision for the number of dogs in a group?
- Is the flooring an adequate surface for the dogs to safely run, play and jump, while being able to be sanitized? Is the floor tile and too slippery for the dogs?
- If your dog goes outside to play at the facility, what is the outdoor area like? All dirt? All dirt play areas send dirty dogs home. This leads to the owner having to give the pet a bath as soon as it gets home. Who feels like doing that every time the dog goes to daycare? There should be adequate sod or mulch and good waste removal habits by the staff.
- What are the requirements for a dog to spend the day? Is the dog evaluated for ability to play well or aggression? Vaccinations current?
- Does the staff of the facility actually understand dog body language, play, aggression, etc. and is the staff able to read signals well enough to prevent injury?
- Is your dog happy to be there? If your dog is going regularly to the facility, and is not excited to go inside when you arrive in the parking lot, then you need to find another daycare. The first couple visits the dog may be hesitant at the reception area. However, the dog should start to interact after a few minutes of acclimation. A good facility will introduce a new dog only to a group of dogs that are known to play very well with others, and who do not have social issues.

In summary, the right dog daycare facility can prevent dog weight problems, increase the dog's ability to interact with others, work the dog's mind as well as muscles, enhance the dog's overall wellbeing, prevent behavior issues, and strengthen the bond between the dog and its owner.

## **Pros and Cons of Dog Parks**

A dog park can provide a lot of the benefits of doggy day care (see previous article) without the cost. But many more variables are at play at a dog park because many more humans are

involved. Dog Parks can be much more dangerous than dog day care. Also, pet owners often do not have 8 hours to spend at a dog park, but only one or two hours at a time. Also, many humans have no idea of proper etiquette for a dog park, or even that a dog should not be yelled at for being a dog while at the dog park. But an informed pet owner can still use a dog park for a positive experience for the dog and for themselves.

Lets discuss some of the pros and cons of a dog park.

### **Pros of Dog Parks**

Many of the pros for day care listed above are also pros for dog parks. Positive points of a dog enjoying a dog park include:

- The benefits of exercise
- Learning to interact with other dogs and humans
- Benefits of mental stimulation for the dog
- Strengthening the bond between pet and owner

The benefits of exercise include prevention of obesity, strengthening muscles and bones, expending excess energy which decreases the likelihood of unacceptable behaviors done out of boredom, and tiring the dog out so it leaves the owner alone. Whether the owner may need to concentrate on a project, sleep through the night without interruption, or enjoy an evening watching tv without the dog asking to play constantly, tiring the dog out at a dog park beforehand is a responsible and positive way to achieve this.

Dog parks expose dogs to others of its species, enabling the dog to learn important social cues, and skills. Dogs brought to dog parks from a young age are typically much more confident in general, in addition to being comfortable around other dogs. Even unexpected interactions with novel dogs goes much more smoothly for a dog that routinely goes to dog parks. Dog park veterans look at other dogs as potential playmates, rather than as a challenge.

Mental stimulation is an important factor to consider in dogs with problem behaviors. How much was born out of boredom? This is especially true for larger breeds of dogs. Large dogs in urban areas often have zero lot line yards, or no yard at all. When do large dogs get to run all out at full speed? Even their play is limited by space at home. These dogs benefit greatly both physically and mentally from the freedom to run and play that a dog park has to offer. Mentally, dogs play games with each other, and use problem solving skills in these games. Even games as simple as “chase” involve mental exercise and problem solving skills. Playing at the dog park constantly introduces novel situations to dogs, increasing their ability to problem solve. Dogs with problem solving skills and well developed social skills are less likely to develop problem behaviors.

Strengthening the bond between owner and pet is easily done with time spent with the pet at the dog park. It is a positive experience for both the owner and pet. The pet learns that going with the owner means fun, and not just going to the vet, groomer, or boarding facility. The social opportunity for the owner is a positive experience also. Owners enjoy talking about their dog to others at the park. Owners meet new people, and take pride in people asking about their dog.

## **Cons of the Dog Park:**

Negative aspects of the dog park are all because the humans involved do not know or understand dog behavior and communication, or the humans involved do not act in a socially responsible manner.

### **1. Innocent Injury –injuries can happen during play.**

This is true with any species. Kids get hurt while playing. Well, so do dogs. Accidental injuries are going to happen. The problem arises when the owners get out of control in the way they deal with those accidents. People that do not understand that injuries happen during play may start threatening lawsuits. Most injuries are minor and do not require medical care. A scrape of a tooth on the skin of a leg is more likely to cause a bruise or superficial abrasion than the scrape of a tooth on a densely furred body area. Bruises, sore muscles, and even pulled muscles are common injuries. This is no different than the injuries from kids playing football, soccer or any other social game.

It should be noted that the innocent injuries can be more severe if the dogs are not evenly matched. That is why there are small dog areas in dog parks, separate from large dog play areas. Even if small dogs are not scared of large dogs, and play well with good social skills, they should not be allowed to play with the big dogs. The risk of serious injury is too great. A 90 pound dog coming down on the back of a 9 pound dog during play can cause serious injury. My 84 pound dog stepped on the foot of a 15 pound dog while trying to jump over the smaller dog. The smaller dog suffered two fractures of the metatarsals, and I was personally responsible for the treatment of that dog. It was innocent, and the owner understood that and was not mad. But this injury could have been avoided if the small dog had not been allowed in the big dog area.

Innocent injury can also happen to a human while at the dog park. Most common is a dog running into the legs of a human. A big dog running in play into the knee of a human can cause serious injury. Dog owners have been carried off in an ambulance due to knee injury at the dog park. Toddlers should be left at home or watched carefully to be kept out of the way of playing dogs. Small children can easily be knocked over by dogs playing and suffer head injuries or broken bones.

Running with sticks! How many times did our parents yell at us not to run with sticks?! Well, we throw the sticks and give them to our pets to run with! Dogs often compete for the toy at a dog park. Injuries from sticks and pointed objects occur at dog parks. Do not throw sticks at a dog park! Throw a ball, or frisbee, or some other rubber toy!

### **2. Non-innocent injury**

Again, this is due to inappropriate human action. Non innocent injury happens when dogs that do not belong at the dog park are brought to the dog park. Unfortunately, it does occur that dogs that are in training for fighting are brought to the dog park and let loose. While rare, it happens, and can lead to serious injury. I witnessed serious human injury when the owner of a victim dog was trying to rescue his dog from the attacking dog. The best thing to do is to stick with humans and dogs that are familiar to you at the dog park. Owners and their pets quickly become familiar with

the safe dogs and also quickly learn what dogs to avoid. Stay away from owners and dogs you have never seen at the park before, until you witness the dog & owner interacting with others.

### 3. Avoidable injury

Choke chains should never be left on a dog at a dog park. The danger of another dog's leg, paw, or jaw getting caught in the choke chain and choking the dog wearing the chain, or breaking a bone in the dog that becomes tangled, is too great. Only collars that can be unfastened if two dogs become tangled should be allowed to be on a dog at play. If two dogs become tangled in a choke chain, the only way the two dogs are going to become untangled is by having a pair of wire cutters handy. How many people carry those around in their back pocket? A dog could choke to death with a crowd of people trying to help because there were no wire cutters handy to cut the choke chain off.

Big dogs accidentally injuring small dogs also fall in the avoidable injury category, although already discussed in the accidental injury section.

Those darn retractable leashes...hate those things... but, owners that leave their dogs on retractable leashes at the dog park can cause injury to other dogs and to humans

Heat stroke is another avoidable injury. Dog parks should not be frequented if they do not have water stations and the ability to hose down a hot dog.

Treats and Food. Do not bring treats and food to a dog park. Competition for food among dogs can lead to fights that otherwise would not have happened. Unfamiliar dogs can approach a human with food and lead the human to act in a manner that is inappropriate. Children should not be allowed to have food at a dog park as injury can occur if a dog attempts to take it from them.

### 4. Inappropriate human interaction:

As a regular dog park attendee myself, I have been witness to many inappropriate human displays. My own dog was kicked in the ribs by the owner of of a Boston Terrier who did not understand that his dog and my dog were having a great time. Neither dog was vocalizing, both were continuing play and were not signaling distress of any kind. Yet the Boston's owner misread the manner in which my dog was grabbing at his dog's neck, and went over and kicked my dog several feet. The injury in this case was not severe, but was actually inflicted by a human on my dog. Injury to human could have followed if I had been more explosive. It is not uncommon for pet owners to be over-protective and end up in fights with other owners at the dog park.

It is not uncommon for a pet owner to come out to the dog park after throwing back a few beers during the football game. Stick with the regular dog park attendees and just avoid potentially explosive individuals.

### 5. Socially irresponsible pet owners.

An obvious negative point of dog parks are the socially irresponsible pet owners that do not pick up after their dogs. They likely do not have their dog on a heartworm preventative which would deworm their dog monthly. Therefore, the dog park is a source to spread intestinal parasites.

Unbelievably, I do see children running barefoot in dog parks, and even swimming in the lakes that are at some dog parks. Parks that include water for the dogs to swim in should not be used as a simultaneous beach for the kids to play in!

Other diseases can be transmitted at dog parks among dogs. Again, stick to dogs and owners that you are familiar with and are regulars.

While on the topic of dog parks that include bodies of water for the dogs to swim, heads up to those of you that live in areas with fresh waters that go above 85 degrees in the summer. Last summer in central Florida 3 young boys died of amoebic encephalitis after enjoying water sports in fresh water lakes. The dog park I frequented includes a huge lake that is ski-able. The health department posted signs warning of the danger of the amoeba and to swim at your own risk. It was almost laughable the people that even leaned on the sign post while watching their dogs play in the water. Keep your dogs out of fresh water lakes that have reached 85 degrees or higher during the summer.

Irresponsible pet owners are also guilty of bringing dogs with no social skills to the dog park. Injury can occur because these dogs are either scared to death and bite out of fear, or are dog aggressive from lack of socialization when young. Again, simply stick to groups of humans and dogs that are regulars at your dog park and play well together.