

Is Your Dog's Ball Safe? By Margit Maxwell

Have you ever seen a dog die right in front of your eyes because a swallowed rubber ball was caught in his throat? It is not a pretty sight. It happened to me last year and it was horrific.

The dog thrashes and claws frantically at his face and mouth. He bites down on the very hands that are trying to help save him and after a few short minutes of oxygen deprivation, the dog often dies before you can drive him to an animal hospital.

All of this unnecessary tragedy could be avoided if only owners would pay attention to the size of the ball with which their dog is playing.

Dog Balls Come In Varying Sizes

Your dog's toys **MUST** be gauged according to your dog's mouth and throat size to prevent accidental swallowing. If your dog manages to swallow the whole toy, you are likely looking at expensive surgery to remove the lethal gastric obstruction.

If your dog swallows a round ball that is the size of his oesophagus, it will likely lodge into the back of the throat where it will quickly cut off his oxygen supply. And try as you might, you likely will not be able to grasp that round wet slimy ball with your bare fingers, and your dog will die right there in your arms. And then you will have a hard time forgiving yourself for not taking a few moments out of your busy day to make sure that your dog's ball is large enough that it will not get lodged into the back of his throat.

- Medium sized dogs are in danger of choking on the tiny dog sized balls.
- Large dogs are in danger of swallowing and choking on most of the average sized balls (tennis balls and medium sized Chuck-It balls).

So inspect your dogs toys regularly to look for wear and tear hazards.

Look to make sure that your young adult dog's mouth and throat size and the ball size are still a safe match. To be safe, move up a ball size, just to be sure.

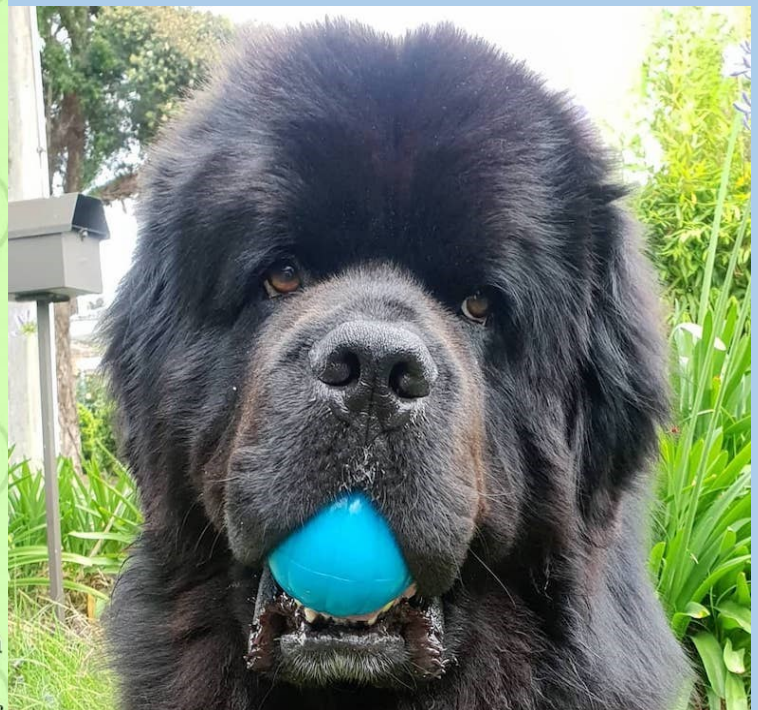
THE DANGER THAT LURKS

AT THE DOG PARK



With the popularity of small dogs these days, that also means that you will likely encounter these small dogs at the dog park. And these small dogs will likely be fetching or playing with a very small sized ball. These small dog balls are most likely to be between 1.89 to 1.65 inches in diameter.

If a medium sized dog (40 to 50 pounds) swallows a ball that is less that 1.5 inches in diameter they can probably vomit the ball back up with little difficulty. But because these small dog balls are larger than 1.5 inches, if your dog swallows one of these balls you are going to have to take the dog into the Vet to have the ball removed.





Consider using good quality durable balls that have a hole through the centre of the ball.

This hole is there to help break the suction tension that can be created when a ball, coated in wet saliva gets into a tight fitting throat space.

That hole MIGHT (as long as the hole is facing you) also help to keep the air passage open until the stuck ball is removed.

But the simplest and safest method of keeping your dog from choking on a swallowed ball is to make sure that your dog is playing with the correct size of ball in the first place.

There is also a problem with small dogs dropping balls in long grass and leaving them behind. Your larger dog will sniff them out and pick them up.

If a larger dog swallows a round object less than 1.5 inches in diameter then they can most likely vomit the ball back up without too much difficulty.

However many of these small dogs balls are between 1.65 inches and 1.89 inches in diameter and are not easily vomited up.

If you notice or suspect that your dog has swallowed one of these smaller balls, then get to a vet fast.

The options you will be given are:

- 1. Wait and see if your dog can vomit the ball back up on his own.**
- 2. Give drugs to make him vomit and then the Vet staff can intervene if the ball should become stuck in his throat.**
- 3. General anaesthesia and endoscope will be used to remove the ball from his stomach.**
- 4. Surgery will be used to remove the ball from his stomach**

And you know that LEAVE IT and DROP IT cue that you have been meaning to teach your dog, but never got around to?

Those two cues can help keep your dog safe when he finds and picks up a ball that is too small for his mouth and throat.

So please monitor your dog when in the park, and put your phone away so that you can see exactly what is happening around you.