USING FOOD DISPENSING TOYS

There are many varieties of toys on the market that can be stuffed with your dogs wet, dry, or raw food. Some of our favorites include the traditional Kong, Sumo, Barnacle, Squirrel Dude type toys. Make sure the toy is size appropriate for your dog - it's better to get a larger toy than one thats too small. Do yourself a favor, and get multiple's while you're at it!

1. Introduce your dog to 'working for food'
Start by filling the toy with your dog's usual meal. Food should fall out easily when the toy is manipulated or moved. A high success rate and lots of reinforcement is key to forming positive associations with the toy. Adding in some high value treats helps!

2. Soak your dog's food in water
Simply add some warm water to the kibble and let it sit for half an hour. Once the water has been soaked up, take a fork or potato masher and mix the food into a paste. Instead of simply falling out of the toy, your dog will now have to work somewhat harder to release the food.

Feel free to add some extra motivation to the mixture! A tablespoon of peanut butter, cream cheese, or canned food will encourage your dog to work harder! Some people like to add pet-safe human foods such as: pumpkin, banana, cottage cheese, tuna, or other enticing treats!

3. Freezing stuffed toys prolongs entertainment
Once your dog eagerly gnaws, chews, licks, and paws at the food dispensing toy you can up the ante! Try freezing the toy for a few hours to solidify the contents. Your dog will now have to work exponentially harder to get to the filling.

Frozen food toys are exceptionally helpful when working with building duration behaviors. Great to use with crate training, as a pacifier while you're at the dinner table, to condition and occupy reactive dogs when visitors are over, and more!

Make sure the toy has holes on both ends to prevent a vacuum. You can also ensure air flow by putting kibble at the bottom before stuffing the toy with a mash and/or freezing it.