



## Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Products

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### Lick Granuloma

Lick granuloma, a condition where an animal habitually licks a place on their body and causes an irritation that can be as mild as a reddened “hot spot” to a severe open mutilation wound. This problem is a common one that dog owners and canine care givers deal with. There are many possible causes for a Lick granuloma, but nutritional, and psychological issues are often at the root.

DogLeggs recommends a three-facet approach for the successful treatment of lick granuloma. Each one of these facets is critical for success, but if any one of the three parts is not addressed the chances of a successful outcome are much lower.

- Coverage of affected area
- Redirect the dog’s oral drive
- Address the psychological issues

DogLeggs’ products have shown to be a very effective coverage solution for breaking the licking and chewing habit that leads to lick granulomas. Although the reason for this effectiveness has yet to be totally understood, it is believed that the materials that are used to make DogLeggs’ products soothe the “hot spot,” protect and aid in healing and provide a bio-feedback to break the licking/chewing cycle. The natural fit and comfort of the DogLeggs’ products are essential, because the solution cannot add discomfort.

Coverage of the site without addressing oral drive and associated behaviors, does not solve the underlying causes that lead to the elevation of the situation to a full case of lick granuloma.

This paper will discuss the contributions of oral drive and instinctual behavior that result in a dog injuring itself through continual licking and chewing on an area of its body.

### Oral Drive

Dogs are by nature oral. Just think of the difference in response to a bee sting or mosquito bite between humans and dogs. Humans instinctively use their hands and swat at the area, while dogs will use their mouths to bite and lick the area. The use of a paw to scratch an area is usually secondary and often only when the area is not accessible to the mouth. A common human response to stress or boredom is picking at their nails and bumps on their arms and legs while the equivalent in dogs is the use of the mouth for licking and chewing. The oral drive also shows up in more positive situations. Many dogs when they are positively excited such as the return of a family member or indications that it is play-time, have to find something to carry in their mouths such as a bone, ball or other toy.

Once licking has developed as a coping mechanism, the habitual licking can lead to skin irritation and in worse cases mutilation.



## Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Products

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The oral drive is hardwired and a habitual licking cycle has two sensory parts, the sensation at the “hot spot” being licked and the sensation at the mouth and tongue. Even when we cure the need for sensation at the “hot spot” we must still give the mouth acceptable/ appropriate stimulation when needed for stress relief.

Redirection of the drive by offering appropriate and acceptable chewing and licking outlets i.e. Nylabone GumBone, Everlasting Treat Balls, Kongs with cheese or p-nut butter or liverwurst in them (all of these can go into the dishwasher for cleaning), BusterCubes, Katie’s Bumpers or Planet Plays with high value treats in them, to name a few. Distributors such as jbpets.com have good prices and selection.

### Instinctual breed specific behavior

Take a moment and think carefully about a few things:

- What is the job your dog was *bred* to do?
- How often does he/she get to do it?
- When did the licking begin?

Most dogs no longer have any other job other than being the family pet, lying around each day waiting for interaction with their family. Those bred to hunt (Labrador Retrievers, Weimeraners, Springer Spaniels, etc.) do not hunt, those bred to herd (Border Collies, Australian Shepherds, etc) no longer tend livestock; those bred to work and protect (German Shepherds, Dobermans, Rottweilers) do not have those jobs. Even if you include the daily defense of your castle against the mailman, you can see that the drives so prized and carefully engineered to create the specific breeds are not utilized, the breeds are chosen for their looks, not their bred in abilities. While you may think that it would be great to be your dog, laying around doing nothing, your dog most probably is anxiously waiting to do the job he is in essence “hardwired” to do. His day provides him no mental or physical stimulation for the activities that hundreds of years of breeding have made him crave.

There are other instinctual behaviors that need to be considered, even if your dog is getting to do their natural job. As you most probably know, dogs are highly social pack animals. Have the pack dynamics of your home changed, causing stress to your dog?

- Additions to the pack? New baby, pet or spouse.
- Deletions from the pack? Has a person or other animal left such as a death, child going to college, divorce...
- Has the pack been relocated? New home or even remodeling?

Any one or combination of these issues can result in mindless licking and chewing to fill the time and release stress.

A routine of mental and physical exercise and life enriching stimulation can enhance the relationship with their owner as well as lessen and in many cases eliminate the dog’s need for habitual licking and chewing. There will still be times of occasional stress or excitement when your dog will need oral stimulation, but with proper redirection they will have an appropriate outlet.



## Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Products

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### Non-breed Specific Mental Activities

Just like the body of a dog requires regular exercise to stay healthy, the brain of any dog, full bred or mutt, requires mental exercise. There are some mental activities that are useful for all dogs regardless of size, age or breed.

One simple activity that an owner may already be doing that can be expanded to satisfy a dog's mental exercise is the regularly scheduled walk. The first thing to remember is that certain behaviors such as tracking (following a scent on the ground or in the air) is a complex mental task. Many owners do not allow their dog the time and liberty on the leash that they need for this activity, often hurrying the dog along to get "their business done". In addition to allowing tracking on the regular walk, changes to the routine such as taking the walk backwards or going on a new path or differing the time can be very effective mental stimulation.

You don't even need to leave your home to challenge a dog's mind. A form of Hide and Seek can be done in the house. Hide small high value treats or small pieces of kibble/dry food or favorite toys in various places around the house. Change the location regularly so that the dog has to utilize its senses to find the reward. This game can be done when you are home or prepared ahead of time so that he has the activity once you leave. Of course hide and seek can be played outside such as throwing a handful of dry food out in the yard, then give the new command "find it" creates a new life enriching exercise. The key to this experience is varying the location of the hidden treasures so the dog does not just go right to where it was last time.

Just like we have learned that playing with toys can be educational for our children, certain dog toys can be useful to provide mental stimulation. Simply rotating the selection of available toys can be effective or adding a new mentally challenging toy such as a Buster cube, Kong or Planet play is helpful.

### Oral Input

We recommend incorporating as part of the treatment of a lick granuloma, Tellington Touch on and around the lick granuloma, Mouth TTouch and if possible, full body work.

Tellington Touch is an innovative method of training and healthcare that provides solid, practical solutions for challenges common among dogs, cats, and other animals. Tellington Touch is based on a set of particular circular movements of the fingers and hands all over the body. Tellington Touch can be done anywhere on the entire body, and each specific touch is a complete therapeutic unit. This treatment is successful in speeding up the healing of injuries or ailments, or changing undesirable habits or behavior.



## Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Products

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Using a combination of specific touches, lifts, and movement exercises, Tellington Touch helps to release tension and increase body awareness; this allows the animal to be handled without provoking typical fear responses. The animal can then more easily learn new and more appropriate behaviors. By using Tellington Touch and a variety of other tools, like the Confidence Course, you can assist the animal in experiencing self-confidence in previously frightening situations. Even the most difficult problems are often eliminated. You can also learn how to apply Tellington Touch to assist with recovery from illness or injury, or just enhance the quality of your animal's life. This gentle method is currently being used by animal owners, trainers, breeders, veterinarians, zoo personnel, shelter workers, Olympic teams and universities in over 30 countries.

**Tellington Touch** on the lips and in the mouth activates the limbic system—the part of the brain that controls emotion, and is the center of learning. The Mouth TTouch is thus helpful for all dogs, but especially for those that suffer from excessive licking, chewing, fear, stress, nervousness and hyperactivity.

**On the Lips** – With one hand under the muzzle, perform light Circular TTouces on the outside of the dog's lips.

**On the Gums**– Gently push your thumb under the lip and use the Circular TTouces on the gums of upper and lower jaw.

Work both sides of the mouth. Many animals are concerned at first and may not like you fingers in their mouths. If you quietly persevere over several short sessions, most animals become accepting and enjoy this TTouch.

### **Tellington Touch for the lick granuloma site–**

The Raccoon TTouch is for injured, swollen or sensitive areas of the body. The small light circles called the Raccoon Touch are useful for reducing any swelling or soreness. You can reduce pain in a short period of time if you apply the lightest possible pressure. Moreover, with the Raccoon Touch you can speed up the healing process and bring awareness to the affected area of the body.

**How To**–Bend the tips of your fingers at a 90 degree angle and move the skin in a tiny one and a quarter circle. This TTouch is done with very light pressure. Make slow, tiny circles with the tips of the fingers using light pressure. Your fingernails should be short enough to allow you to use the fingertips and not have nails come in contact with the area being worked.

Using the Raccoon TTouch work around the margins of the lick granuloma and then toward the center in circles, if the dog brings his head toward your hand as you are working around the lick granuloma, do not correct him/her, instead, stroke the dog's lips with a medium pressure, from nose toward ears once or twice, help him/her lay down by gently placing a hand on its neck and pushing gently, return to applying the Raccoon Touch around the lick granuloma.