

The Most Dangerous Pet Chew ever: RAWHIDE!

Planet Paws with [David A. Procida](#) and [10 others](#) This article is reprinted from <https://www.facebook.com/PlanetPawsPetEssentials>. Thanks to Planet Paws for this insightful info.

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How can one of the most popular chew sticks on the planet be so dangerous for your pets, you ask? I mean, most dogs chew on rawhide for hours on end, and not only does it keep them busy, but they seem to last forever.

Well if you understood what it took to make this toxic “raw” leather stick, you would quickly understand what the problem is.

Aside from the horror stories circulating all over social media these days, of pets needing emergency surgery after consuming rawhide, the majority of pet parents today, especially the newbies, believe that this chew is some sort of dried up meat stick. Let me debunk that myth right away!

A rawhide stick is not the by-product of the beef industry nor is it made of dehydrated meat. Rather, rawhide is the by-product of the “Leather Industry”, so theoretically it is a leather chew. Sounds awesome, right?

“Producing rawhide begins with the splitting of an animal hide, usually from cattle. The top grain is generally tanned and made into leather products, while the inner portion, in its “raw” state, goes to the dogs.” [TheBark.com](#)

So, how does this leather, which is conveniently rolled up into pretty shapes, actually get made into those rawhide chews?

Follow along my friends and I will enlighten you on how this hide travels through a leathery process where it transforms from hide to a not-so beautiful, colorful, chew stick. Here is a paraphrased tutorial that was explained by the whole dog journal several years back:

STEP 1: Normally, cattle hides are shipped from slaughterhouses to tanneries for processing. These hides are then treated with a chemical bath to help “preserve” the product during transport to help prevent spoilage.

(No one wants to purchase a black, spoiled rawhide stick!)



Once at the tannery: the hides are soaked and treated with either an ash-lye solution or a highly toxic recipe of sodium sulphide liming. This process will help strip the hair and fat that maybe attached to the hides themselves. (No, no one wants to see a hairy hide...)

Next on this glorious journey, these hides are then treated with chemicals that help “puff” the hide, making it easier to split into layers.

The outer layer of the hide is used for goods like car seats, clothing, shoes, purses, etc. But, it’s the inner layer that is needed to make the rawhide. (Oh and other things like gelatin, cosmetics, and glue as well!)

STEP 2: Now that we have the inner layer of the hide, it’s time to go to the post-tannery stage! Hides are washed and whitened using a solution of hydrogen peroxide and/or bleach; this will also help remove the smell of the rotten or putrid leather. Bonus! (Research also shows that other chemicals maybe used here to help the whitening process if the bleach isn’t strong enough.)

STEP 3: Now it’s time to make these whitened sheets of this “leathery by-product” look delicious! So, here is where the artistic painting process comes in.

“Basted, smoked, and decoratively tinted products might be any color (or odor) underneath the coating of (often artificial) dyes and flavors. They can even be painted with a coating of titanium oxide to make them appear white and pretty on the pet store shelves.” – whole-dog-journal.com

“...the Material Safety Data Sheet reveals a toxic confection containing the carcinogen FD&C Red 40, along with preservatives like sodium benzoate. But tracking the effects of chemical exposure is nearly impossible when it’s a matter of slow, low-dose poisoning.” – thebark.com

Ok, now that these hides have been painted, it’s time for the final process.

STEP 4: Getting it to last forever!

Because the FDA does not consider these chews to be food, really it’s a free for all when it comes to the manufacturers of these leather strips, and the products they may want to add to these chews, to get them to last forever. Any sort of glue can be added here to get these bad boys to never come apart.

When tested: Lead, arsenic, mercury, chromium salts, formaldehyde, and other toxic chemicals have been detected in raw hides. So it’s safe to say that any sort of glues can be used as well!

Finally, it’s time to package and attach all the glorious marketing labels to the product.

Check out the fine print warning that’s attached with some of these rawhides:

“Choking or blockages. If your dog swallows large pieces of rawhide, the rawhide can get stuck in the esophagus or other parts of the digestive tract. Sometimes, abdominal surgery is needed to remove them from the stomach or intestines. If it isn’t resolved, a blockage can lead to death.”

(Oh, how lovely...)

And there it is! It’s now ready to be shipped to store shelves where it can be purchased for our loving animal companions.

How do proactive veterinarians feel about these chews?

Here is world-renowned veterinarian [Doctor Karen Becker](#)’s take on the matter: “The name ‘rawhide’ is technically incorrect. A more accurate name would be processed-hide, because the skin isn’t raw at all. But the term “rawhide” has stuck.

Rawhide chews start out hard, but as your dog works the chew it becomes softer, and eventually he can unknot the knots on each end and the chew takes on the consistency of a slimy piece of taffy or bubble gum. And by that time your dog cannot stop working it — it becomes almost addictive.

At this point, there's no longer any dental benefit to the chew because it has turned soft and gooey, and, in fact, it has become a choking and intestinal obstruction hazard."

P.S. Ready for the jaw dropper?

An investigation by Humane Society International stated in their report, "In a particularly grisly twist, the skins of brutally slaughtered dogs in Thailand are mixed with other bits of skin to produce rawhide chew toys for pet dogs. Manufacturers told investigators that these chew toys are regularly exported to and sold in U.S. stores." – dogingtonpost.com

[Rodney Habib – Pet Nutrition Blogger](#)

"An educated, informed and well-researched community of pet owners can only put more pressure on the pet food industry to be better! When pet owners know better, they will only do better!"