

Simple Shelter Enrichment for Dogs

An enriched environment is one in which an animal has variety, choice and control over its daily activities. Environmental enrichment should be conducted as part of a comprehensive behavioral wellness plan that ensures all animals receive proper housing, consistent daily routines, adequate physical exercise, mental stimulation, social companionship and positive reinforcement-based training. These exercises will be most effective when utilized as a preventive measure, rather than when trying to address problems that are already in existence. Enrichment should address all the senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

- Provide a raised bed or soft bedding for comfort
- Use feeding devices rather than feeding from bowls – Kongs® and Tug-A-Jugs™ are great but plastic bottles, milk jugs, laundry jugs, or other disposable containers work very well as an inexpensive option (make sure to take the labels and plastic rings off the soda bottles prior to giving to the dogs; also check on dogs the first few times you give them plastic bottles as enrichment to make sure they are not ingesting pieces of plastic)
- Spray Lavender or food scented air fresheners in the kennel areas 1-2 times per day
- Play “find it” or tracking games
- Play soothing music to reduce stress
- Hang wind chimes in the dog room and hit them a couple times a day
- Hang a mobile and set it into motion a couple times a day
- Blow ‘bubbles’ in the kennel
- Provide toys in the cage, rotating them often for novelty
- Provide chew items
- Freeze toys and treats in ice blocks and hang from top of cage
- Social contact with other dogs via playgroups or walks together
- Social contact with people – leash walks, grooming, petting, playing
- Aerobic exercise
- Clicker training – to teach skills and for mental stimulation
- D.A.P. (dog appeasing pheromone) - Plug a diffuser in small rooms or place collars on dogs that are stressed or frightened in a kennel setting

