

## Home alone – and happy!



*Nosework is mentally and physically tiring. The SnuffleMat™ also doubles up as a comfy pillow!*

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*Dogs often have favourite resting places – even if they may seem rather unlikely to us ...*

dogs like to curl up, others prefer to sleep lying flat on their side: a position that allows complete relaxation for deep sleep. Is your dog's bed big enough? A bed that is too small can cause back problems. Would your terrier appreciate a sleeping bag-style tunnel bed? Does your elderly dog need a firm, raised bed?

Keep your dog's bedding clean: Vet Bed™ is a product that can be very easily washed and tumble-dried. Some dogs love to 'nest', and will dig and paw their beds until they are comfortable, so perhaps provide a loose blanket on top of his bed for this purpose.

Deep, relaxing sleep that repairs, rejuvenates and increases dissipation of stress hormones is essential for health and vitality. A dog who is constantly aroused and on the look-out for threats may produce more stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which can have a negative impact on health, deprive him of good quality sleep, and cause him to become more reactive and less likely to settle when home alone. Consider the effect that light pollution has on your dog's evening and night-time sleep quality, too. If his sleeping area is too bright at night, less efficient production of melatonin – an important hormone that

## Managing the environment

*... and some find the gentle pressure of resting their chin comforting: especially if this is on a favourite toy.*

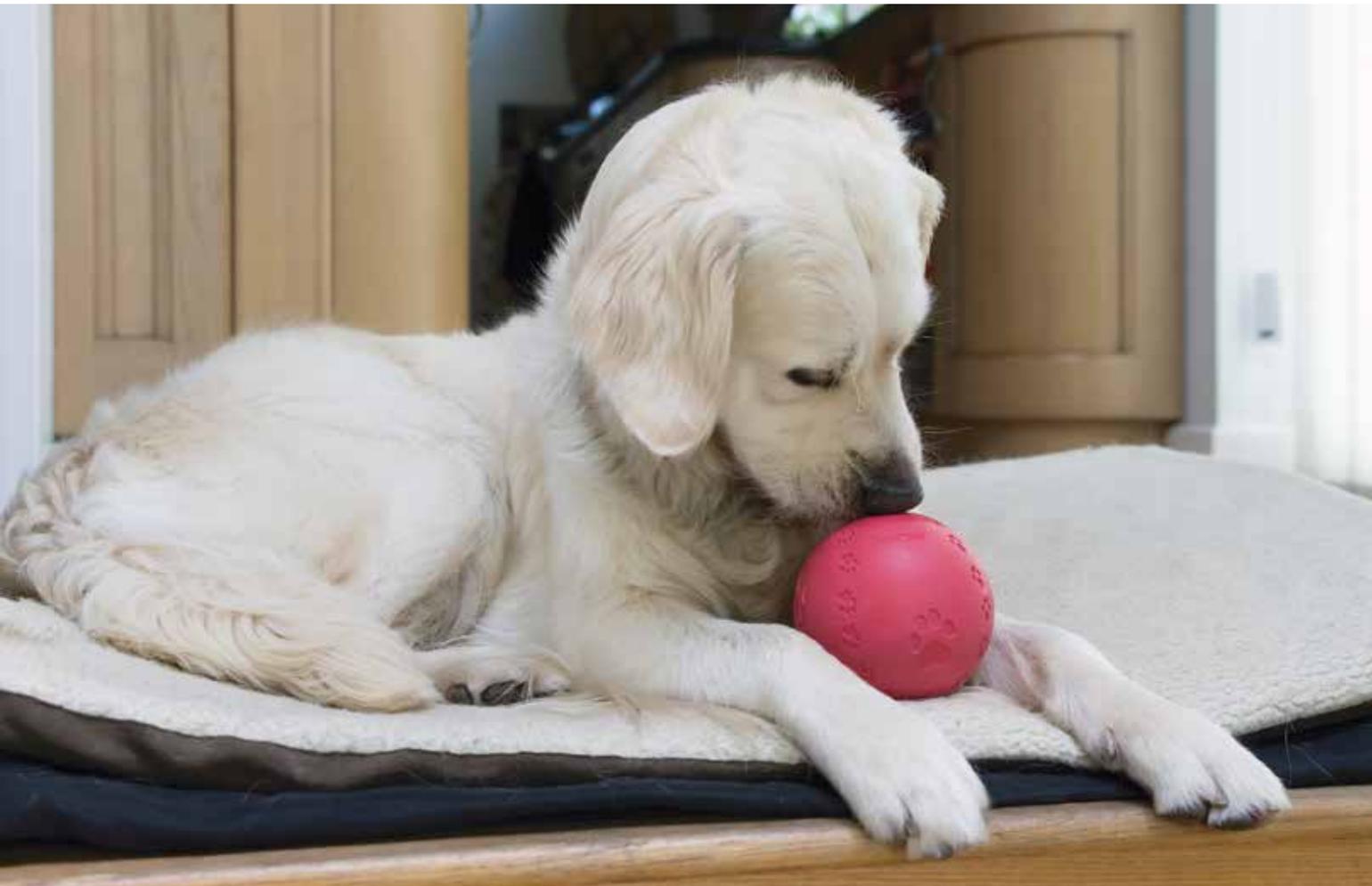


## Building independence

for being alone is the pleasure of eating, and start this from the day your dog or puppy comes to live with you, if his appetite is good. (Some puppies are reluctant to eat for a few days, often brought about by the stress of leaving mum and siblings, in which case wait for your puppy's appetite to pick up before starting this regime.) One simple activity is to scatter your dog's kibble, or some treats, around the garden for him to forage on his own. A favourite canine pastime is scenting, so rummaging around in the grass for food is likely to be very enjoyable.

Foraging engages the seeking circuit, the part of the canine brain that makes exploring the environment – especially for food – exciting and pleasurable. The seeking system is essential for survival, and harnesses a dog's natural instincts. Start by scattering the food in a small area of the garden to make it easy for him to find, gradually increasing the difficulty by spreading the food over a larger area, allowing him to spend longer happily foraging while you are in the house. (Never leave your dog alone in the garden when out of the house. You will have no control over what

*Giving our dog a food-dispensing toy before he is left alone allows us to pair our departure with something pleasant for him, and there are a great many different interactive food dispensing toys on the market. Treats can be hidden in an activity ball to chase ...*



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*Make sure that all toys are strongly made, and specifically for dogs, such as this plaited fleece tug.*

