

Hybrid Decorating or Destruction?

Owning a wolf-dog hybrid could try the patience of a saint. Socialization and training can take the edge off many behaviors that are hardwired into the animal.

This is one area of behavior that seems to be deterred only by intense supervision, making a home wolf-proof, or by relocating the animal to a more natural environment—outdoors in a large, escape-proof enclosure.

Overview

Although all puppies and young dogs are destructive to some degree, wolves and wolf-dog hybrid puppies are more intense in this as in all areas. They don't seem to outgrow this phase as many regular dogs do. Instead the destructiveness often grows worse as they get larger and stronger. Typically, the less enriched their lives, the more destruction will be evident.

Many wolf and wolf-dog hybrid owners have referred to that destruction as "creative decorating," but that is really misleading. There is nothing creative about hundreds or thousands of dollars of damage done in a single afternoon. This is something you must be prepared for if you are to become a wolf or wolf-dog owner, especially if you decide to house your animal inside while you are away for even short periods of time.

Below we will discuss the types of damage that have been done by wolves and wolf-dog hybrids both inside the house, and outside in their own pens.

In the house

Most wolves and wolf-dog hybrids cannot be trusted alone in a house for any length of time. They do not understand that there are things that are off limits, or that you'd rather they didn't touch, mouth, chew, or eat. It is not uncommon to hear of wolves or wolf-dog hybrids who have been left alone in the house for short periods of time that have completely destroyed sofas, ripped up carpeting and vinyl, chewed door and window frames, and even eaten or clawed through walls. One wolf-dog hybrid chewed and clawed through a wall in twenty minutes, just long enough for the owner to make a quick trip to the store. Others have been known to open refrigerators, cupboards and closed doors, and even to turn on faucets. Although this may sound cute or even funny, the damage has cost hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars. It has often been said and we find it to be true, "if you don't want your wolf-dog hybrid to learn how to do something don't EVER do it in their presence". This includes opening the refrigerator and cabinets, flushing the toilet, or any other activity that does not require an opposable thumb.

Though some incidents of destruction seem funny in the telling, they are anything but funny while experiencing them.

Hard, solid objects should be safe from damage, right? A wolf-dog hybrid couldn't kill a toilet! Or could they? Remembering a trick she learned as a puppy, Princessa flushed the toilet to get a drink of cool water. Whoops, she had dropped something in! Where did it go?

When the owner got up for work, the first flood happened. Nothing was visible down there, and the plunger just made for more flooding. Call the plumber. After four hours of work by the plumber snaking lines, checking all equipment, and finally tearing the toilet off the floor in frustration, the problem was traced to the bowl. Someone mentioned kids throwing toys into the toilet. Couldn't be, no children in the house! Just the wolf-dog hybrid. When it was obvious the throne had to be replaced, it was decided to break it open and find out what the problem actually was—a dead rodent, a stuffed toy?

What was seen upon breaking it was impossible. Wedged securely in the trap of the bowl was a tennis ball, Princessa's favorite toy! The tennis ball was wedged so tightly in the trap that it was impossible to get it out without shattering the bowl into thousands of pieces. But wait—tennis balls float! But not once this girl has had them for fifteen minutes—1500 psi of jaw pressure make short work of such things. She likes them better popped anyway. And they sink in water soooooo nicely. When it doesn't come back up, what can one do? Well, flush, of course! Another couple of hours and the throne was as good as new—well, it was new.

New toilet—\$136.

Plumber—\$455.

Wolf-dog hybrid's momentary amusement—priceless

In addition to damage, your home probably isn't secure enough to contain a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid for long. Many of these animals have learned to turn a doorknob with their mouths. Others have broken through windows on their quest for a great outdoor adventure. If they want to get inside, window glass and screens seem to be little deterrent.

Many wolves and wolf-dog hybrids are difficult to house train. So, in addition to the damage, the problem of feces and/or urine decorating the floors and walls may also arise.

Some wolf and wolf-dog hybrid owners have provided their animals with a doggy door, thinking that access to their outdoor pen would curb the destructiveness and lack of bladder and bowel control. Instead the owners came home to find not only the house and furnishings destroyed, but also things like stereo pieces, chair cushions, pillows and even small appliances dragged outside, played with and destroyed—often to the point of being unidentifiable.

Others have crate trained their animals and left them in the crates while they were at work. On their arrival home they found the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid had escaped the crate by destroying it, and much of their home was destroyed as well.

These exotic canines can be very vindictive in their destruction derbies. This example was hilarious to those who didn't experience it.

Gelfling was used to being in her crate in the bedroom while her owner was gone for short periods of time. No problem. Then one day her owner was gone for 14 hours. The owner came home to find the crate destroyed, her dresser drawers opened, her underwear chewed and decorating the room, her personal products destroyed, and her side of the waterbed destroyed. Nothing of her husband's had been touched. The flood from the destroyed waterbed was a week drying out. Hubby actually found it funny - his stuff was untouched.



And then we come to the kitchen—where we find counter surfing, garbage diving, and refrigerator raiding as the preferred Olympic events on any given day. Leaving anything edible on the counters almost insures that it will be taken out the doggy door or to the new carpet to be enjoyed. That standing rib roast that was left to thaw will not be eaten at the human's table tonight. It tasted better frozen anyway. Don't plan on catching the wolf-dog hybrid with their prize either, once they have something they plan on keeping not only can they defend it with lots of teeth, but they also run much faster than you can. Will child proof latches on the cupboards and the refrigerator be sufficient to keep their inquisitive noses out? Maybe, but there is a good possibility that they will just chew through the

cabinets if they want what's inside. Didn't have time to do the dishes? No problem—they will probably be strewn across the floor, licked clean, and then used like hockey pucks. In addition, your lack of dishwashing expedience could result in a trip to the emergency veterinarian to remove pieces of glass from paws, eyes, or throats.

So what do you do with a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid when you are away from home? That's easy. You contain them outside!

Outside

Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids need their own secure pen when they are outside. This must be an area that you allow them to do what they do best—be wolves and wolf-dog hybrids. Do not plan on keeping a garden with beautiful plants and flowers. You will find them dug up repeatedly, eaten and strewn about the yard. If the plants are toxic or poisonous, a visit to the emergency vet may be necessary.

Wolves and wolf-dog hybrids dig. They dig and dig and dig some more. In the wild, wolves dig dens in which to birth their young, protect themselves from the elements, and holes to hide their kills. In the yard these exotic canines will dig to escape the elements even though they have beautifully designed shelters, to hide their toys and food, and for the sheer fun of digging. Holes created by wolf-dog hybrids are often several feet deep and may be quite large in circumference. These holes may threaten your containment (see section on appropriate containment), may topple dog houses, cripple the owners, and could ruin the foundation of your home. They are large canines; they dig large holes.

Although it is imperative that you provide shade for your animals, it is not uncommon to find the wolf or wolf-dog hybrid gnawing on trees like a beaver. Many have chewed on trees until it caused irreparable damage. To save the remaining trees, owners have enclosed the trees in heavy chain link, sometimes hot-wiring the fencing to protect the trees.

Yard equipment must be for their chewing pleasure, what other purpose could it serve? The barbecue has delicious smells remaining from the last cookout. The prizewinning restored motorcycle has a seat and handlebars with which to clean their teeth. Shovels, rakes, hoses, and such are great prizes to be carried around and then chewed into small pieces.

What will make them learn not to destroy your possessions? Absolutely nothing. If they can reach it, the item becomes theirs, no matter what it is or who it used to belong to. The best way to ensure that expensive and irreplaceable items remain intact is to keep them out of reach of curious teeth and paws.

There are many drawbacks to wolf or wolf-dog hybrid ownership. Destruction is just one of the many, but it is often one of the more costly. Televisions and computers normally escape their interest—except for all of those irresistible cords hanging down, and the peripherals they can manage to get into their jaws and out the doggy door.

Irreplaceable family heirlooms have no place in their world. Wolf-dog hybrids don't understand the difference between the newspaper you let them chew and the family photo album circa 1860. Nor do they realize there is a difference between the old tennis shoe and the \$1,000 lizard skin boot they snagged from the top shelf of the closet. The leather smelled better anyway.

Many people have made light of tales of mass destruction as being nothing more than what all puppies do. Then when they find that the couch has been torn apart to locate the squeak, or the BBQ was demolished for a lick of the grill, or the entire underground sprinkler system was dug up just because, they begin to understand what is meant by the word “destruction.” In the wild, wolf pups play by ripping and tearing things found in the environment.

Once again, you can hope for the best, but always be prepared for the worst. A spin of the genetic roulette wheel will determine exactly what personality and temperament traits each animal acquires.