

## Eating Rocks

**Eating rocks and pebbles can cause serious problems for dogs.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

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Q. One of my dogs eats the pebbles in the flooring of the kennel (pea gravel). He has done this since a puppy. Some days his BMs are almost all gravel. I worry that one day he'll have a blockage problem. Now my other dog seems to be beginning to mimic him. My question is this: Do I replace the gravel with concrete and put a sealer on it or do I overlay the gravel with the new "artificial" wood deck product? Is the concrete bad for their pads and would it give them those horrible calluses on the elbows? They are in the kennel only while I am at work, otherwise they are always with me. I foster a lot of dogs through Golden Retriever rescue, so it's a busy household. I appreciate any feedback that you can give me.

A. Pebble and rock eating can become serious business. I have seen X-rays of dogs that are housed on gravel where their entire intestinal track and stomach is full of small rocks. When they poop, it is basically a pile of rocks. Long term, this could cause a blockage, ulcers or even a perforation (tear) in the walls of the intestines.

You should replace the gravel with some other surface. Sealed concrete is easy to clean, but you should provide some bedding for your dogs to lie down on (assuming they won't eat the bedding).

Composite decking would also be an excellent choice, since it does not splinter or need to be stained. Since you are a rescue-dog mom, it's probably worth it to get new flooring put in your kennels. Thanks for the work you do, by the way.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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