

African Wild Dogs Meet Their Match

Dogs infamous for quickly destroying toys with their jaws receive donations.

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The African wild dogs at the Kansas City, Mo., Zoo are having a ball with the recent donation of 12 Vibram balls and 12 Shooey Chewies dog toys.

Zookeepers interested in improving the quality of life for the endangered species reached out to My Good Dog, makers of the dog toys, said spokeswoman Anne Tommasi. "It was important to us to help make a difference for this extremely rare breed and also was an opportunity to demonstrate the durability and plain fun of the Vibram ball," she said.

The African wild dog, also known as the cape hunting dog and painted hunting dog, are infamous for quickly destroying toys with their powerful jaws. According to Kansas City zookeeper Linda Long, the donated pet toys have made a significant impact on the enrichment program for the dogs.

"African wild dogs have incredibly strong jaws designed to help them take down prey significantly larger than themselves – some as large as one ton," Long said. It's difficult to find durable items for the dogs to chew on to exert those instincts, she added, and the Vibram balls are a good match.

The toys that were sent to the zoo would also be suitable for all but the smallest toy breed dogs, Tommasi said. The estimated value of the donation was \$348.

African wild dogs are one of the most endangered species of carnivores with as few as 3,000 to 5,000 living in the wild. With the recent birth of five pups, Kansas City Zoo now has seven dogs living in captivity.