

## Helping Destructive Behavior in Dogs

**New techniques and products offer hope for owners of destructive dogs.**

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Ed Thompson opened the front door of his house and grimaced. He knew it was going to be ugly.

His personal redecorator had been hard at work. An upended potted plant spilled dirt onto the coffee table. Boots were scattered on the couch. Laundry, papers and every small object in the place, from sunglasses to salt shakers, covered the floor. And sitting smack in the middle of the chaos with an oh-so-innocent tilt of the head was Cisco, the 3-pound Rat Terrier Chihuahua-cyclone mix responsible for the mess.

"Jeez, I was only gone a couple of hours. It's a good thing you're so darn cute," Thompson told Cisco.

Owning a furry home wrecker can be frustrating because, unless you catch your dog in the act every time, punishment rarely does any good. "Coming home and shrieking at your dog after the fact just doesn't get it," said Jacque Schultz, director of companion animal services at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals headquarters in New York. "There are far more effective strategies available for coping with a destructive pet."

New training techniques and products designed specifically for curbing destructive canine behaviors combined with some new twists on tried-and-true approaches can dramatically reduce owner-dog conflict over home wreckers.

Cisco's case is typical, said Robin Kovary, a dog trainer, canine behavior consultant and director of the American Dog Trainers Network in New York. "It's perfectly natural for a dog to explore his surroundings with his nose and his mouth," she said. "But if the dog becomes destructive or obsessive about it, you have to take action."

Kovary listed insufficient exercise, boredom and separation anxiety as the top three reasons dogs become destructive. "Dogs are pack animals," she said. "They need socialization, stimulation and exercise."