



Resource Guarding

Resource Guarding, or the act of defending an item or access to an item, is a natural, evolutionary behavior. Even Humans do it! Most of us understand that it is considered impolite to eat off of someone's plate. You might have a better chance of getting away with it with someone that you have a relationship with, but most strangers are likely to respond aggressively. Now, if you regularly steal food or attempt to steal food off of your brother's plate, or attempt to steal his favorite food or food there may not be excess of, he's far more likely to become defensive about your thievery.

While Resource Guarding is normal, some dogs can have a response that goes beyond what we see as appropriate. We want to make sure to keep our dog's relationships safe and further convince them that there is no need to guard their food, as there is plenty more and their humans will keep them safe and well fed.

Management & Prevention Tips:

- Call dogs away from each other if one is eating or chewing on a beloved item. Hovering is just as impolite as stealing.
- Feed meals separately, as eating right beside each other can add tension that may brew into guarding later. Opposite sides of the room or separate spaces is a best practice for avoiding resource guarding.
- Provide high value items like cowhide or filled KONGS to dogs when they are in their own spaces or separated by a baby gate or in another room.
 - Be sure to remove their goodies before they return to sharing space
 - Make resources plentiful! If there's crowding around the water bowl or competition around toys or plush bedding, add in a few extras. The more of these resources there are, the less reason to guard them.
 - Everybody enjoys a bit of down time. Remember to allow your dogs some time apart; it's great for their own confidence and tolerance. Downtime or Alone Time provide a great opportunity for access to bones and chewy items that may be guarded if their siblings were present.





- If you've got a super-speed eater, you might want to utilize a Slow-Bowl or Puzzle Feeder. For a quick DIY option place a tennis ball or upside down mug inside the bowl. Moistening the kibble can also help add a few more seconds to a meal.
- When adding a new pet to your household, it's best to manage and prevent guarding from the beginning. You may not want to add in toys right away, and it is best to feed separately.

Training Tips:

- Be mindful of a few body cues that your dog might give to warn you or your dog to go away, which would indicate they are guarding an item:
 - Placing chest/chin over an item
 - Lowering their head and looking up towards you- showing the whites under their pupils
 - Showing teeth or growling while standing over an item
 - Quickly grabbing an item and turning their head away, especially when another dog or person passes or approaches
- Work on a few manners cues with your pups to allow them to confidently work near each other, practice eating in the other's presence and practice looking to you for direction. A few helpful behavior cues to work on might be:
 - "Leave It" – This should be used to tell your dog they cannot have access to something.
 - "Stay" – teaches your dog to hold their place and position until released
 - "Wait" – teaches your dog to be patient and they'll get what they wanted – like food, toys or outside time
 - "Go to your _____" – send your dog to a special spot, like their crate or a bathmat. On that spot they can learn to hang out and wait for goodies
 - Recall – Teach your dogs to come when called. This is hugely useful when there is an item worth guarding. Calling your dog away from the item is typically far more successful and less stressful than attempting to remove the item itself.

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation