



# Food & Resource Guarding

## How to Manage it

Food or resource guarding is when a dog displays behavior meant to keep someone from taking away something very important to them. This is perfectly normal and natural behavior for a dog -- like digging or barking! When dogs are in a stressful environment like a shelter, they are more likely to display guarding behaviors. However, research has shown that adopters often see different behaviors once the dog is in their new home. Many adopters simply manage around this behavior.

## Management

- Do not get the dog too riled up for meal time. Feed the dog in a low-key area where they will not be bothered. Try to find a feeding area that is not near the entrance to the room. A dog crate or kennel could also be appropriate.
- Many dogs who highly value food will eat quickly. Once the dog has finished, let the dog out of the crate or room/area, away from the food bowl. Then remove the bowl when the dog is out of sight.
- Remind children to leave the dog alone when eating. Children often miss a dog's warning signals, so it is best for them to keep distance.

## Resource Guarding Signals

- Stiff body
- Staring with hard/unblinking eyes
- Holding head or paws over the valued item
- Snarling (showing teeth)
- Growling

Please stop interacting with the dog. Move away and simply let them consume the food item rather than trying to take it away. Or, offer a tasty treat (really tasty -- like ham/turkey/cheese!) as a trade. Or, show your dog their leash, call your dog away and go for a walk while a family member removes the item.

## Training

Guarding behavior can be modified but should be done so under the guidance of a trained positive reinforcement professional. A good trainer can help your dog learn to love people approaching while they are in possession of a treasured resource.

**Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation**

Walnut Creek, CA • (925) 256-1273 • (800) 567-1273 • [arlife.org/pet-care-and-behavior-library](http://arlife.org/pet-care-and-behavior-library)