



Resource Guarding

What is resource guarding?

Resource Guarding is where a dog places value onto an item, a person or environment and reacts to a perceived threat.

Examples of what dogs can guard

- Bowls (food or water)
- Beds
- People
- Toys
- Food

Why is my dog showing these behaviours?

Interestingly, these behaviours can in fact be innate and normal. This means it can come with the territory of being a dog. They can also be learnt behaviours, especially from very young if they've ever had to compete their litter mates for food. Your dog may show this behaviour if at any point they have been made to feel anxious about a valued item/food bowl being removed from them.

What shouldn't I do if my dog displays resource guarding behaviour?

Don't do things such as removing their food bowls whilst they are eating, this can create anxiety around eating and associating your approach negatively, causing a higher possibility of resource guarding behaviours. Think about it this way, if you were enjoying your meal and someone came along and removed it, how would that make you feel? You may have a few choice words. Dogs are the same and have emotions that should not be ignored and instead understood and nurtured.

What do I do if my dog shows this behaviour?

It is important not to shout or react negatively when this happens, although understandably it is a shocking and potentially scary incident to be involved in. Try to call your dog away from a distance, if this doesn't work try attaching their lead and physically, but gently, pulling them away from the valued item.

Always reward your dog for showing non-resource guarding behaviours. This communicates to them what you desire. Allow your dog to eat their food in "peace", do not remove their food, let them eat it and only remove the food bowl once they have walked away and are finished. Likewise, if they show this behaviour with toys, leave them well alone until they are done.

Can I use training for Resource Guarding?

Yes, but be careful if re-directing to a toy or giving a food treat as this MAY reinforce the behaviour. However, you could try this if this is the safest way you find to limit the behaviour.

You could also train your dog to associate your approach with positivity by dropping treats on the floor as you walk by. This is called counter conditioning, where you are changing your dog's current conditioned response to your approach, to something else.

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