



Resource Guarding

When your dog considers a thing or place valuable and she's afraid to lose it, she may show resource guarding. This could be around food, toys, bones, sleeping spots, even the TV remote.

What Resource Guarding Looks Like

- Your dog runs off with certain toys (or other things) and may hide them.
- Your dog uses her body to prevent you from touching the toy, by lying on it, putting her feet on it, or moving her body so you can't get to it.
- Her body stiffens and/or she stares at you nervously when you approach her.
- She snarls, growls, or snaps when you try to remove the item.

Exercises to Help

Note: If your dog growls, snaps, or bites you over favorite things or food, consult a professional trainer for a safe and non-confrontational training program.

Nothing in Life is Free: This simple training principle is a great way to build a stronger relationship with your dog, encourage polite manners, and teach your dog that all good things come from you. It boils down to this: Whatever your dog wants, don't give it away for free. Ask for a simple command such as sit before providing your dog with food, toys, attention, etc.

Bonuses: Often, when people approach a dog enjoying a toy or her food, the people take the enjoyable thing away. So it's not a surprise when a dog starts to see people approaching as bad news. Instead, try approaching your dog just partway when she's enjoying a toy or bone and toss her a small piece of cheese or another extra-yummy treat. Then turn and leave her in peace.

Food Bowl Bonuses: After practicing the general Bonus exercise, you're ready to start adding bonus treats directly to your dog's food bowl. One way to do this is to feed handful by handful: Put a handful of food in your dog's bowl and move away. When she has finished eating that and the bowl is empty, approach the bowl and add another handful of dog food plus some special treats. Feed the entire meal this way.

Reward the Response: Now that you've mastered the above exercises, you'll start to see your dog's reaction to you approaching her food bowl change. She will look up at you in an excited way and may wag her tail. Reward this reaction with praise and treats from your hand to let her know you like this reaction.

Trade Up: Find an object your dog is comfortable with you picking up, like a toy she isn't interested in or her empty food bowl, and practice trade-ups. A trade-up shows your dog that whenever you take something of hers, she gets something even better in exchange. Pick up the toy, give your dog an extra-yummy treat from your other hand, then immediately return the toy.

Information adapted with permission from San Francisco SPCA.

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