

Resource guarding

understanding why dogs protect the things they value

Dogs protect things they value for the same reason that many animals do – because those things are important to them. Resource guarding is not a sign that a dog is being "naughty", "stubborn" or trying to take charge. In most cases, it reflects an underlying concern about losing access to something they need, enjoy or find comforting. By understanding the emotions driving the behaviour, we can focus on helping dogs feel more secure rather than punishing the warning signs they display.



WHAT MIGHT DOGS GUARD?



Food & treats



Access to owners



Toys & chews



Other dogs



Stolen items



Their own body



Resting places

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Many dogs display subtle signs before aggression occurs...



Tense body posture



Hovering over an item



Hard staring



Rapid eating



Growling



Lip curling



Barking



Snapping



Biting

These behaviours are your dog's way of communicating that they are uncomfortable with the situation

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Taking food away from a puppy whilst they are eating
- ✗ Punishing AND/OR ignoring growling
- ✗ Physically forcing items from your dog's mouth
- ✗ Ignoring early warning signs
- ✗ Assuming your dog is being "dominant" or "stubborn"
- ✗ Waiting until a bite occurs before seeking help

♥ Remember always try to **trade rather than take**

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Respect the warning signs and back away. Growling and lip curling are important communication methods. If these signs are punished or ignored, dogs often learn they need to "shout louder".
- ✓ Don't remove your puppy's food bowl. People approaching food should predict positive outcomes, not loss of access to food.
- ✓ Prevent rehearsal. **Avoid** situations where your dog repeatedly practises guarding behaviour.
- ✓ In some cases, pain or underlying medical conditions may contribute to resource guarding behaviour, so discussion with your veterinary surgeon may also be appropriate



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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