

Resource Guarding



Resource guarding is when a dog shows aggression over a ‘resource’ towards another animal or human. While food possession is the most common form of resource guarding behavior, there are many other resources that a dog can guard, such as:

- Toys, bones, or high value items (paper towels, socks, etc.)
- Areas- such as a spot on the bed or a couch
- Attention- owners commonly refer to this as ‘jealous’ behavior
- Laps- more typical in smaller breeds
- People- such as primary owner or child

Resource guarding can be caused by a change in home environment, sudden illness/injury, or can even be part of your dog’s genetics. Depending on how severe the behaviors are, dictates the probability that this can be trained and/or managed safely in a home environment. When working with a dog that shows resource guarding behaviors, **it is best to work with a [certified dog trainer](#) in any aggression issues.** For more information on choosing the right trainer, review our behavior resource guide. Additionally, especially if dog issues are a new behavior, it is always important to **check in with your veterinarian** to explore any underlying medical conditions that may be contributing to the aggression.

The following tips below are only to be used for temporary support, until an appointment with a certified, professional dog trainer can be made.

Guidelines for managing dog aggression issues:

- **Please Never!** – These following ‘training’ methods are more likely to cause yourself harm and increase aggressive behaviors from your dog, then actually decrease resource guarding. Please never attempt to pet your dog while he is eating or near the valued resource, never place your hand in the food bowl, and never take away the resource while they are engaging with it.
- **Food possession** – Food-based resource guarding can make mealtimes challenging. Dogs that show aggressive behaviors when eating should be kept separate from all other animals and people during mealtimes. Depending on the level of aggression seen and the household capabilities, feeding a dog in a separate room may be an option. However, crates can be very useful and may make your home a little safer overall. When feeding in a crate, let your dog outside or put pup in a separate room while you place the food bowl in the crate (this decreases opportunity for your dog to resource guard while you are holding or close to the food), close the crate, let your dog in, direct him/her towards the crate, and close the crate door behind the dog. When your dog has finished eating, open the crate but do not force your dog to leave the crate. Once your dog has left the crate and is outside or in another

part of the house, (not in view of the crate) remove the bowl, clean, and place in a cabinet or similar location.

- **Manage items** – To establish a safe environment, identify items in the household that may trigger your dog to resource guard. Keep toys stored away, replace bones with quick treats that can be eaten instantly, and place towels or socks in cabinets or closets to prevent easy access to your dog. These actions may seem like a punishment- but these are safety actions for *temporary* use until you can create a training plan with a professional trainer.
- **Prevent Rehearsal** – For dogs that tend to resource guard attention, laps, or areas it is best to try to prevent repeated situations from occurring. Keep your dog off of your lap, try to keep dogs separate so they do not feel the need to compete for human attention, or prevent your dog from getting to valued spaces (bed, couch, rug). Again, these actions may seem like a punishment- but these are safety actions for *temporary* use until you can create a training plan with a professional trainer.
- **Redirect Away** – If your dog does gain access to something that triggers resource guarding, it is best to try to redirect them away from it. For example, if your dog is on the bed and has shown aggression when someone else tries to get into the bed- you can toss treats to lure the dog off of the bed. It may be best to toss treats into a crate or the hallway, so that when your dog does leave the bed, you can shut the door and keep the dog separated while you sleep.
- **Muzzle Training** – muzzle wearing is also a very useful skill for your dog to have when dealing with aggression issues. Muzzle training sometimes has a general misconception of negative connotations, but this skill is extremely useful for a dog who is dealing with aggression or a wide array of other behaviors. Muzzles can make a situation a lot safer and can allow for more training opportunities for your dog. Its important to remember that even if your dog is sporting a muzzle comfortably, that does not mean that exposure to the trigger (dog or humans that your dog reacts poorly to) should not be avoided. Please continue to avoid interactions that your dog has reacted poorly to. For more information on muzzle training, go to <https://muzzleupproject.com>.
- Sometimes, even the best management plan can fail and your dog may become involved in a dog altercation. If an altercation does occur, it is important to use methods of separation that keep yourself and other people safe. Never use your hands or body to attempt to disengage dogs in a fight. Trying to pull dogs apart not only puts you at risk, but also may cause some dogs to bite down harder. Use loud noises (yelling, clapping, banging pots, slamming a door) to try to interrupt the fight and separate as quickly as possible once the fight stops. If loud noises do not disengage the dogs, then water or even a long item like a broom can help separate the dogs. After separation, please contact a veterinarian or emergency vet clinic for any injuries that may have occurred. For more information on defensive handling and resource guarding, visit <https://aggressivedog.com/webinars>.

*If any bite, injury, or other emergency happens while working with your dog- please separate and contain the dog as quickly and safely as possible. Call 9-1-1 for medical assistance and call Animal Law Enforcement at 719-302-8798 for assistance with a dangerous dog.