



Resource guarding fast facts

- Resource guarding is aggression directed towards another individual who approaches or attempts to obtain something that the aggressor controls access to or possesses.
- Resource guarding is a normal behavior for dogs AND humans. This is why people have alarm systems in their homes – they are protecting important resources. However, resource guarding can become problematic or what many call maladaptive. For example, imagine if your house alarm triggered every time your neighbor stepped foot on the porch to say hello!
- Preventing a problem with resource guarding is much easier than curing an existing problem.
 - Do not intentionally take away food or high-value items from your dog just because “you should be able to”. This runs the risk of causing a problem around resources rather than teaching your dog how to give them up.
- In a dog’s world, what is in their possession is theirs. A dog will not understand that grabbing the garment you just dropped is “wrong.” Your attempts to retrieve the item will be seen either as a fun game or a worrisome attempt at thievery.

Preventing and treating aggressive resource guarding both rely on making the dog happy to see you approach no matter what items are currently in the dog’s space. We do this by:

- 1) Training useful cues ahead of time so that IF a situation arises where you need to remove an item from your dog, you have a dog who is much more likely to give up the object. (see “drop it” and “leave it” handouts)
- 2) Offering high value reinforcement when you approach if the dog shows any sign of guarding. This should be practiced every day with a dog that is currently guarding. (Stop your approach before the dog is actively guarding and toss the high value item to your dog. Over time you will reduce the distance between you and the dog)

3) Managing the situation to limit the dog's access to items he is known to guard.

Troubleshooting

- If your dog has an item that is not dangerous or a problem if your dog damages it, ignore your dog. Some dogs will actually start to steal items for the attention and in those cases, removing the attention helps to remove the reward.
- If your dog has a dangerous item and he either does not know or is not responding to a drop it cue, then try to find a higher value item your dog is allowed to possess and trade it (if it is safe to do so) or toss the high value item across the room.
 - When removing a dangerous dropped item make it disappear quickly so your dog can not retrieve it.
 - If trading or throwing higher value items fails you can put a slip lead on your dog and walk him back and forth quickly to try to get him to drop the item. **ONLY** do this if you can **safely** put the lead on your dog.

A dog that aggressively guards resources is dangerous. **Removing the resource by using aggression** (scaring the dog away, kicking or hitting the dog, yelling at the dog) **will make the problem worse.**