



DOG TRAINING FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Resource Guarding in Dogs

Signs, Symptoms, and Top 10 Tips for Prevention and Training

Signs & Symptoms of Resource Guarding

- • Freezing/Stiffening – Dog suddenly stops moving and body becomes rigid near the item.
- • Hovering – Dog lowers head/body over food, toy, or chew to shield it.
- • Whale Eye – Whites of the eyes showing while glancing sideways at the approacher.
- • Growling – Low vocal warning when someone gets close.
- • Snarling or Showing Teeth – Clear escalation if earlier warnings ignored.
- • Lunging or Air-Snapping – Quick defensive attempt to drive the threat away.
- • Actual Biting – Highest escalation if earlier warnings failed.
- • Blocking/Shouldering – Dog physically positions itself between the resource and others.
- • Quick Eating or Gulping – Consumes food rapidly to prevent it being ‘stolen.’
- • Tense Tail & Ears – Tail stiff or tucked, ears pinned back, showing unease.

Top 10 Tips for Handling a Dog that Resource Guards

Safety First

Guarding can escalate quickly, so prevention is your best friend. Feed in a quiet, separate space. Remove high-value items like bones when kids or guests are present. Management prevents accidents while training progresses.

Respect Warnings

Growling and snarling are communication, not misbehavior. If punished, the dog may skip warnings and go straight to biting. Respecting warnings builds trust.

Identify Triggers

Not every dog guards every resource. Make an inventory of what items or situations trigger guarding. Clarity helps build precise management plans.



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Trade Up System

Teach that humans approaching means something better is coming. Offer a high-value treat in exchange for the item. Avoid snatching; build trust.

Hand Feeding & Positive Associations

Drop small pieces of high-value food into the bowl while the dog eats. This conditions them to see human approach as positive.

Desensitize Approaches

Start from a safe distance, toss treats, and retreat. Gradually close the gap over time. The dog learns to welcome approach instead of fear it.

Teach 'Leave It'

Practice impulse-control cues with low-value items, then progress to higher-value ones. Helps prevent guarding before it starts.

Build 'Go to Place' Cue

Train the dog to relax on a mat or bed. Use this safe station during meals or chew times to reduce conflict.

Use Management with Other Dogs

If multiple dogs live together, separate them during meals or high-value chew times. Rotate access to prized items to prevent fights.

Seek Professional Support

For severe cases (lunging, snapping, biting), contact a Certified Professional Dog Trainer or Veterinary Behaviorist. Early intervention gives the best results.

Trainer's Note:

Resource guarding is rooted in survival instinct. Our goal is not to eliminate it completely but to reshape how dogs feel when humans or other pets approach their prized possessions. With patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement, most dogs can learn to relax instead of react.