

### What does resource guarding mean?

It means that your dog may exhibit aggressive behavior when he is in possession of an item that he feels is valuable. Although it is an undesirable behavior in a household setting, in the wild, protecting resources is beneficial for survival and therefore, is a natural behavior for dogs. Dogs that are aggressive when guarding a high value item may not be aggressive in any other context. Common items to guard include dog food bowls, bones and rawhides, food wrappers, toys, paper products and stolen items (e.g. dirty laundry).

During your dog's behavior evaluation at DCHS, he guarded:  Food Bowl  Toy  Rawhide/Bone  
While guarding, your dog exhibited the following behavior(s):  Growling  Biting  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Your dog's previous owner(s) reported that your dog guards: \_\_\_\_\_

### How can I prevent resource guarding?

- **Control access.** The easiest way to prevent resource guarding is to avoid giving your dog high value items that he guards.
- **Management.** Sometimes it's impossible (or undesirable) to completely limit access to a high value resource (like food). In those instances, avoid approaching your dog while he is eating, or put him in another room or a crate when you give him a high value resource.

### What should I do when my dog starts resource guarding?

- **Use caution.** Do not approach your dog or try to take the item away. Do not yell or cause a big fuss.
- **Distract him.** Ask if he wants to go for a walk (be sure to follow through!). Or, go to the location of his treats and call him over for an impromptu training session on an easy command that he already knows, like sit. The goal is to get him to leave the item, put him on leash, and then secure the leash on a doorknob while you go and retrieve his stolen item.
- **Remove your attention.** When you see he is guarding something, immediately leave the room and shut the door behind you, leaving him alone with the resource. If/when he wants to leave the room (barking, whining or scratching at the door), open the door a crack but only allow him to join you when he has abandoned the resource. You may have to open/close the door multiple times before he is ready to abandon the resource. Once he has left the resource to join you, praise and pet him, then go and get the resource (be sure to keep him out of the room while you retrieve the item).
- **Emergency situations.** To get dangerous or stolen items away from your dog in an emergency, toss a large amount of treats away from your dog (so he leaves possession) and use caution to retrieve the item.

### How do I train my dog to stop resource guarding?

- **Hire a professional.** A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (<https://www.animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php>) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (<http://www.ccpdt.org/>) can help you systematically treat your dog's guarding behavior through a desensitization and counter conditioning protocol. This procedure should only be done by, or under the guidance of, a professional because a strong grasp of dog body language, learning theory and timing is necessary to safely and effectively work through the protocol.

### Additional resources:

- "Mine! A Practical Guide to Resource Guarding in Dogs" by Jean Donaldson, available on Amazon.com