

RESOURCE GUARDING

Resource guarding is a relatively common behaviour in dogs. It can occur when your dog feels worried about a treasured item or resource being taken away.

Just as we protect our homes and valuables, it is normal for dogs to feel protective over items they consider to be important.

The most commonly guarded resources include:

- Food
- Items associated with food (e.g. empty food bowls, bins, food wrappers)
- Toys and balls
- Locations (e.g. beds, areas where dog is usually fed, food preparation areas, entrances to areas)
- People (i.e. individuals within the family)

What does resource guarding look like?

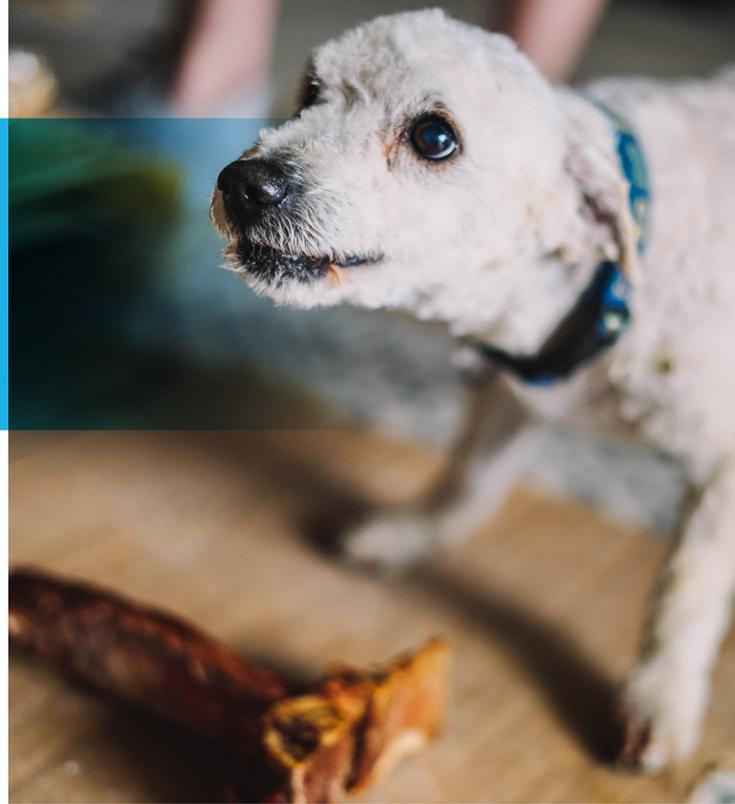
Some common signs of resource guarding are:

- Eating food more quickly as you approach
- Hunching over the item
- Staring at you
- Moving between you and the resource
- Growling
- Showing teeth
- Barking
- Rushing or lunging towards you
- Air snapping
- Biting



The important thing to remember is that dogs who guard resources are not 'bad'. They are usually feeling insecure and trying to communicate that they are feeling threatened.

If you notice your dog showing any signs of resource guarding you should slowly move away and give your dog more space.



Dogs who feel that more subtle attempts at communicating their needs have gone unnoticed will often escalate to more severe behaviour such as snapping and biting.

How can you help your dog?

You can help your dog by providing a quiet, safe space for them to eat their meals, chews and treats without being disturbed. It's extremely important not to pester your dog or try to 'test' their behaviour. If you have more than one pet at home, make sure that you can separate them at feeding time to avoid competition and stress.

Pets can also compete over your attention. Providing a treat in an enriched environment for one dog while you spend time with another can help reduce anxiety. Make sure that there are more than enough resources such as beds, food and water and toys to reduce the risk of conflict.

How to teach your dog to 'give':

- Begin a fun game of tug with your dog
- After a few seconds offer a treat under their nose in exchange for the toy.
- Repeat this exercise, adding in the word 'give' right before offering the treat.
- Your dog will start to drop the toy following the 'give' cue. Don't forget to reward with a really great treat to show your dog how well they've done!