

How to recognise and deal with resource guarding in dogs leading to an aggressive dog.

Resource Guarding in Dogs.

What is Resource Guarding in an aggressive dog.

Resource guarding is when a dog displays protective behaviour over items they value—like food, toys, beds, or even people. The dog perceives a threat to their access to these items and reacts to keep others away. Dog guarding food is an example of resource guarding.

The Perceived Threat of an Aggressive Dog.

Dogs guard resources because they feel something important to them might be taken away. This can be triggered by:

- People approaching while the dog is eating
- Other pets coming near their favourite toy or resting spot
- Attempts to move the dog from a comfortable location

The dog's response is their way of saying, "This is mine, and I don't want to lose it."

Varied Expressions of Resource Guarding

Not all dogs show resource guarding in the same way. Common

signs include:

- Freezing or stiffening when someone approaches
- Growling, snarling, or baring teeth
- Snapping or biting if the warning isn't heeded
- Eating faster or trying to hide the item
- Blocking access with their body

Some dogs may be very subtle—just shifting their body or giving a hard stare can signify an **aggressive dog** in the making.

Common Resources Dogs Guard

- Food bowls
- Treats or chews
- Toys
- Beds or resting spots
- Found objects (e.g., socks, tissues)
- Sometimes, even people

Potential Dangers

Resource guarding can escalate if not addressed. Bites are a real risk, especially for children who may not recognize warning signs. It can also create stress in multi-dog households and strain the relationship between dog and owner.

How to Address Resource Guarding

1. Don't Punish

Punishing a dog for guarding often makes things worse. It teaches the dog that their fears are justified.

2. Management

Prevent situations where guarding might happen—feed dogs separately, pick up high-value items when guests are over, supervise interactions with children.

3. Desensitization & Counterconditioning

Work with your dog to change their emotional response:

- Start by approaching from a distance where your dog feels safe.
- Gradually get closer, tossing high-value treats as you do.
- Teach your dog that your approach means good things happen—not that something is taken away.

This process is best done under professional guidance.

4. Teach “Trade” or “Drop It”

Reward your dog for willingly giving up items. Never forcibly remove an item from a guarding dog.

Preventative Measures

- **Early Socialization:** Expose puppies to gentle handling around food and toys.
- **Positive Associations:** Regularly add something better to your puppy’s bowl while eating (like a tasty treat), so they see people approaching as a good thing.
- **Supervision:** Monitor interactions between dogs and kids or other pets.
- **Training:** Teach cues like “leave it,” “drop it,” and recall.

Need Help?

Resource guarding can be tricky—and every dog is different. Don’t wait for things to get worse or risk injury.

If you’re seeing any signs of guarding, or want to prevent problems before they start, [book a training session today](#). I work with you and your dog using kind, effective methods tailored to your situation.

Let’s make life safer and happier for everyone in your home!

