

**Resource Guarding from People**

**What is Resource Guarding?**

Resource guarding happens when a dog tries to protect things they find valuable, like food, toys, or even a favorite resting spot. This behavior can occur with both people and other pets. In this document, we’ll focus on managing resource guarding between dogs and people. If you're dealing with guarding between pets, refer to **"Resource Guarding in Multi-Pet Homes - Dogs"** for more details.

**Handling Resource Guarding**

**Recognizing the Signs**

It’s important to recognize resource guarding behavior early so you can manage it before it becomes a bigger issue. Signs that your dog may be guarding from you or other people include:

* Growling, snapping, or stiffening when you or others approach their food, toys, or resting areas.
* Blocking access to a valued object with their body.
* Taking an item and moving away to a quiet space to guard it.

These behaviors show that your dog is worried about losing something important, and it’s essential to respond calmly and with care.

**Desensitization with People**

One way to help your pet feel more comfortable is by desensitizing them to your presence near their valued items. For example, if your dog guards their food, stand a few feet away while they eat and toss a tasty treat toward them. This will teach your dog that when you’re nearby, they get even more rewards. Gradually get closer over time but go slowly to avoid stressing your pet.

**Avoid Force or Punishment**

Never try to take an item away from your dog by force, as this can make them feel more anxious and increase the risk of aggression. Instead, focus on using positive reinforcement and showing your dog that when people approach or ask them to give up something, it leads to rewards.

**Trade for Something Better**

If your dog is guarding a toy or chew, offer them something they value even more. Show them a treat they love and ask them to “drop it.” When they let go of the item, reward them with the treat and praise. Over time, your dog will learn that giving up something doesn’t mean losing it—it means getting something even better.

**Teach "Leave It" and "Drop It" Commands**

Teaching commands like “Leave It” and “Drop It” can help prevent guarding from happening. Here’s how to teach “Drop It”:

1. Start with a low-value item and a high-value treat.
2. Let your dog have the item, then offer the treat while saying “Drop It.”
3. When your dog drops the item, give them the treat and praise.
4. Repeat until your dog consistently drops the item when you ask.

Practice with different items, and gradually move to more valuable ones as your dog improves.

**Managing the Environment**

While you’re working on training, manage your dog’s environment to prevent guarding. For example:

* Feed your dog in a quiet area where they won’t feel threatened.
* Limit access to high-value toys or chews when other people are around, unless you’re actively working on training.
* Create safe spaces where your pet can enjoy their items without feeling disturbed.

**When to Seek Professional Help:** If your dog’s resource guarding involves growling, snapping, or biting, it’s important to seek help from a professional behaviorist. A trained expert can create a personalized plan to safely address the issue.