

**Resource Guarding in Multi-Pet Households**

**What is Resource Guarding?**

Resource guarding occurs when a dog tries to protect things they value, such as food, toys, or resting spots. This document focuses on managing resource guarding between pets. ***If you need help with resource guarding between pets and people, refer to "Resource Guarding from People - Dogs" for more information.***

**Recognizing the Signs**

Knowing the signs of resource guarding early can help you prevent conflicts between your pets. Common signs include:

* Growling, snapping, or freezing when another pet approaches their food, toys, or favorite spots.
* Blocking access to an item with their body.
* Taking items to a quiet place to guard them from other pets.

These behaviors show that your dog feels worried about losing something important, and it’s key to handle the situation calmly.

**Separate Feeding and Rest Areas**

One way to manage resource guarding between pets is by giving each one their own space. Feed pets in separate areas where they can feel safe, and make sure each pet has their own resting spots and toys. This reduces the chances of competition and the need to guard resources.

**Desensitization Between Pets**

Desensitizing pets to each other’s presence around valued items can help them feel more comfortable. For example, if one dog guards their food from another dog, start by having the second dog at a distance while the first dog eats. Toss treats to both dogs to create positive associations. Slowly close the distance between them over several sessions but stop if either pet seems stressed.

**Avoid Competition**

In homes with multiple pets, competition can lead to resource guarding. Make sure each pet has their own food bowls, toys, and resting areas. Rotating toys and chews can also help reduce attachment to any one item.

**Trade for Something Better**

If one pet is guarding a toy or chew from another, offer the guarding pet something even better. Show them a treat they love and ask them to “drop it” or “leave it.” Reward the pet when they let go of the item, and make sure the other pet is safely at a distance. This teaches them that giving up something leads to something even better.

**Managing the Environment**

Managing the environment can help prevent resource guarding between pets. Here are some tips:

* **Separate Feeding**: Feed pets in different rooms to reduce competition.
* **Limit Access to High-Value Items**: If your pet guards toys or chews, keep them out of reach when other pets are around unless you’re actively working on training.
* **Safe Spaces**: Give each pet a quiet area to enjoy their items where they won’t feel disturbed.

**Gradually Increase the Challenge**

Once your dog is comfortable with desensitization and trading, you can practice in more challenging situations. For example, if your dog has learned to relax when another dog is nearby during mealtime, try moving closer or allowing other pets to be present during feeding. Watch for signs of stress and go slowly if needed.

**When to Seek Professional Help**

If resource guarding between your pets involves growling, snapping, or fighting, consult a professional animal behaviorist. A professional can help design a plan that works for your specific situation.