

morley vetcentre

RESOURCE GUARDING

Resource guarding refers to a dog displaying behaviour (growling, snapping, etc.) intended to convince other dogs or humans to stay away from a particular treasure or “**resource**.” The **resource** can be food, treats, toys, a place (a bed or favourite chair), or occasionally a person.

A PROBLEM—OLD FASHIONED TRAINING!

One of the biggest myths in dog training is the old ideal that ‘you should be able to show your dog who is the boss by being able to take away his food bowl, favourite toy, tasty chew’. This idea, which is based on the outdated beliefs of ‘dominance theory’ (we promise you your dog is not trying to ‘be dominant’—these methods have been **disproved** time and time again) will cause your dog to feel the need to guard his possessions.

A human example: you are sitting enjoying your favourite meal at your favourite restaurant and the waitress approaches—she snatches away your entrée before you have finished eating...you are annoyed. Next comes main course, and it is delicious, but, without any warning your waitress reappears and snatches the plate of yummy food away, OK now you are getting ANGRY....so dessert then arrives and it is so amazingly tasty.....here comes that waitress again.....before she has a chance to snatch away the dessert you SHOUT ‘STOP’ and then probably give her a barrage of choice words to let her know ‘stay away from my food’.

Now.....look at it from your dog’s point of view.... Snatching valued possessions away from your dog destroys trust and creates issues!

If your dog is showing signs of resource guarding please contact a qualified, force-free dog trainer or veterinary behaviourist— a carefully planned behaviour modification program is essential—resource guarding involves AGGRESSION and needs a trained professional.



PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE!

The aim is to teach your dog that WONDERFUL things happen when people approach his food/toys/bed etc. This exercise should be done with ALL dogs and repeated through out their life to prevent resource guarding issues from arising.

Back to the restaurant: now imagine that you have a new waitress....one who brings over some freshly baked bread rolls (yum!) to enjoy with your entrée, who then brings over a delicious sauce or gravy to pour over your main meal, and then you see her approach as you are enjoying your dessert. Instead of dreading her approach (is she going to snatch away my food this time???) you are keen for her to approach—what is she bringing now.....maybe a frothy cappuccino or an after dinner chocolate?! We LIKE this waitress!!

Back to the dog—by following the same concept as the good waitress in the restaurant we can teach your dog that wonderful things happen when people approach your dog’s valuable resources.



TRAINING 'GOOD STUFF HAPPENS'

1. When your dog is chewing on a favourite treat enter the room and from a distance flick some HIGH VALUE treats towards him (you are bringing dessert!)
2. Turn around and leave the room
3. Repeat the process MANY times—we want the dog thinking 'WOOHOO come and join me' and 'PLEASE come back and bring more yummy dessert!'
4. Repeat the exercise with other resources (toys/bed etc)
5. Repeat on a regular basis through out your dog's life. **GOOD things happen when people approach!!**

TRAINING 'GIVE' and 'OFF'

There will be times when you need to take a resource away from your dog (for example a sock they have found—we don't want them to swallow it!).

Teach your dog the cue GIVE or TRADE. Start with objects that he does not value as much and treats that are highly valued. Then gradually work your way up to objects that he cares very much about. Ask for him to give the object, then either wait for him to do so (if he knows the cue) or cause him to do so by presenting food near his mouth. Reward and praise him for dropping the object, then give it back to him as soon as he's done chewing (if safe to do so.....socks will not be returned!). Practicing this cue, giving the resource back nearly every time, helps the dog understand that giving away his resources to a human is a good thing, so there's no reason to guard them. Children should only work on this step under adult supervision. Start with the adult family members.



Teach your dog the OFF cue. If he is guarding the furniture, teach him to jump off of it on cue. Get him up on the couch by patting on it or luring him with a treat. Don't give the treat yet (we want to reward for "off", not jumping on the couch). Then say "off" and lure him back onto the floor. Give him the treat. Don't start to teach off when your dog is all settled down on the couch. Work up to that level.



For further advice please contact us at
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