

RESOURCE GUARDING

Dogs guarding possessions is normal behavior, passed on from their wild ancestors. However, resource guarding can sometimes be problematic for family pets expected to live in a home.



Dogs differ in their levels of resource guarding and the items they find valuable. Dogs may guard resources from other dogs, cats or humans. Resource guarding can range from a dog running away with a toy to growling, biting or fighting with other dogs in the home.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

- **Food/food bowls** - this is a common resource that dogs guard. It is not reasonable to expect all dogs to freely share food. Foster dogs should always be fed meals in a crate or alone (away from other animals and humans) to prevent resource guarding incidents.
- **Bones, treats, toys** - some dogs guard every toy, others guard items they consider “high value,” such as marrow bones, etc. New foster dogs should never be expected to share treats or bones with other animals. Kongs and bones should be given in a crate or when the dog is separate from other dogs. This is the most common situation where we see dogs fight - when a resource is involved.
- **Places or furniture** - some dogs can guard a couch or bed from humans or other dogs.
- **Random objects** such as remote controls, sticks, etc.
- **Humans** - some dogs begin guarding their preferred humans by growling or using assertive body language when animals or other humans come near. This is always something that needs to be addressed with a trainer as soon as possible.

MANAGEMENT

When introducing two dogs, ensure that no resources like bones or toys are present.

Some resource guarding can be safely managed and others require professional intervention. Dogs can guard resources from other dogs (or animals) and they can guard resources from humans. If you notice resource guarding, let your foster team know immediately.

Many foster parents and responsible dog owners live with dogs who resource guard and manage it safely using separate feeding, removing high value resources and giving dogs space.

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Both of my dogs resource guard food and toys. We feed separately - either in a crate or individual room - and we are a no-bone, no-toy household. When we eat dinner, our dogs are crated. We had to adjust but our dogs are thriving. We removed our expectations of what we thought made dogs happy and realize this: our dogs are just fine how they are.

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