



Managing Resource Guarding – Food Bowl

Do you live with a dog that is protective of his food? Signs include: gulping food, taking big bites, freezing or even growling.

Research has shown that many owners find that managing food guarding behavior is easy and fits well into their lifestyle. It is frequently seen as a simple-to-follow lifelong solution. Below are some management tips recommended by the Humane Society of Missouri.

- **Feed the dog a scheduled meal** rather than leaving the food out all of the time. It is important to remove any conflict or anxiety from the feeding situation. The food bowl should be picked up and put away unless it is feeding time.
- **The dog should be outside or in another room when the food is being prepared.** The food is then placed in a secure location, preferably a room with a door that can be locked or inside a crate if the dog is accustomed to it. Secure confinement is essential if children are in the home.
- **The dog is then placed in the room or the crate with the food and the door is closed.** When the dog is done eating, it often will bark or scratch at the door. The dog is then released and let outside, and while the dog is gone, the food bowl is picked up and put away.
- **If other dogs live in the home, feed them in a different room away from the other dog.** Only once they have finished eating and their food bowl is taken up, and they have been let outside should the other dog be released from confinement
- **At no time should the dog be fed in an area where other people or animals are present** since this poses a danger to those in the vicinity of the dog while it is eating.
- **Family meals should be eaten at the table** to avoid food stealing and possible guarding behavior. You may also consider safely confining your dog behind a baby gate in or in a crate with his meal until you have finished eating and removed all remnants of food.



For some dogs management will help decrease their anxiety and remove the source of conflict between the family and the pet. For many owners, management is the preferred method for living with a food guarding dog.

Never attempt to modify food guarding without direct help from a qualified trainer or veterinary behaviorist. Refer to our online handout *“Trainer’s List in This Area”* for names of local trainers the Humane Society of Missouri works with.