

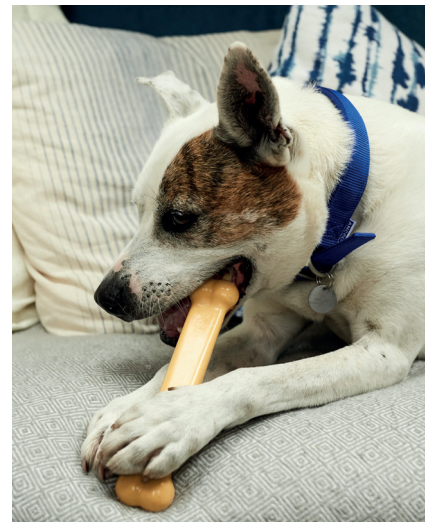
PREVENTING AND MANAGING RESOURCE GUARDING

Resource guarding is when a dog becomes defensive in order to keep you away from a particular item or “resource” that they treasure. The resource can be food, treats, toys, a place, like a bed or favourite chair, or occasionally even a person.

Resource guarding is a natural behaviour for your dog, and an important survival strategy as a scavenger in the wild, but at home there are some things we can do to reassure our dogs and let them know they don't need to become defensive. However, if your dog is showing extreme resource guarding behaviour, we would recommend contacting your vet who can recommend a qualified behaviourist.

Prevention is better than cure, so even if your dog isn't showing any obvious signs of resource guarding, it's a good idea to carry out this training to reduce the chances of them developing problems around food or toys in the future.

You can find the video that accompanies this advice in the pet advice section of the Battersea website, and on our YouTube channel.



STOP RESOURCE GUARDING BEFORE IT STARTS

To start, you will need some treats. The trick is to teach your dog that a person approaching is a positive thing. As your dog is finishing a meal, approach close to where they are eating, drop some treats near to their food bowl and calmly move away. Allow your dog to eat the treats and then return to finishing what is in their bowl. Repeat this a couple of times over a few days, always moving away and allowing your dog to eat the treats.

Over time you may see that as you approach your dog, they look up as they anticipate a treat arriving. This is a positive sign that they see you approaching as a good thing.

As your dog starts to anticipate the treats, you can then approach while they are eating and drop the treats slightly closer to their food bowl before

moving away. Once they're comfortable with you dropping the treats closer, you can step it up again.

At mealtimes, keep back some of their dry food. Wait until they have finished their food then approach and add another small handful to their bowl. Let them finish it completely then approach again and add a little more.

Approaching and rewarding will show your dog that someone coming close to them is a positive thing.

RESOURCE GUARDING WITH TOYS

You can also use the same technique to prevent your dog guarding their toys or chews.

When your dog is settled with their chew or toy, place a few treats down on the floor near to where they are lying and give them the opportunity to leave the resource to take them.

Move away as they do so, then approach them again and put down another treat nearby.

Repeat this a few times and once your dog is comfortable, put down a few treats and then pick up the toy/chew. By using positive methods your dog will continue to associate you being near their resources with positive things happening, like treats.

STOP RESOURCE GUARDING ONCE IT HAS STARTED

If your dog is already showing some resource guarding behaviour, it is important to try and stop it from becoming any worse. The more a dog repeats a behaviour, the more likely they are to keep doing it, so we recommend getting in there early and trying to manage the situation. If your dog is already displaying extreme guarding behaviour we would recommend contacting your vet who can recommend a qualified behaviourist who will be able to help you address the issue safely.

1. Make sure all family members and everyone who visits know never to approach or interrupt your dog if they are eating or have a chew.
2. As best as possible, hide or remove any items that your dog may steal and guard so that you do not have to confront your dog. If you do have to remove something from them, make sure it's an exchange rather than just taking something away.
3. It is important that you never punish or tell your dog off for resource guarding as this will add more stress to the situation and may cause their behaviour to worsen.
4. When you are trying to exchange items with your dog, put down some food or treats a good distance away so that your dog has to move. This will give you the time and distance to safely pick up the item. If you can wait to remove the item until the dog is in a different room entirely, that's even better.
5. Another helpful tip is to teach your dog the "leave it" cue. This will allow you to ask your dog to leave whatever they are guarding in a safe and positive way. Check out our "Teach your dog to leave it" video on the Battersea YouTube channel or our website to find out how.

6. Remember every dog is different with their resource guarding, and if your dog has bitten or is causing you concern then we would recommend contacting a certified behaviourist to help.
7. If you find these methods are not working for your dog it's a good idea to speak to your vet who can recommend a qualified behaviourist to help with your situation.