

## Resource Guarding

Firstly, do not worry it is part of a growing puppies make up to challenge their owners **it doesn't mean they are going to grow into an aggressive animal.**

Most dogs will happily give up a toy to his owner or let the owner be close by when he is eating or chewing in his bed, but some dogs will show aggressive behavior when approached, whether that is his own bed or the settee. Dogs may even act like this when someone else approaches his favorite human while he is getting a fuss! it is called resource guarding and the behavior can include staring at the approaching, lip lifting, snarling, snapping, and ultimately biting.

This is actually a normal canine behaviour in the doggy world it is acceptable for one dog to warn off another if it approaches when the other is eating or resting in a favorite place.

In nature the approaching dog should take heed of this warning and back off. Escalates to biting only occurs if one or both dog do not fully understand dog body language or if both dogs are equally determined to defend the object, i.e. they both value it to a similar degree and both have confidence in their ability to win any fight with each other.

Although we now understand this behaviour normal, it is not acceptable behaviour to show humans as there is a risk of injury if not controlled, especially if a child, who may not notice or understand a stare or lip lift, approaches the dog while it is guarding something.

Resource guarding often first develops in puppies who compete with litter mates for resources each wanting that particular toy or too eat out of that bowl.

Puppies will learn from each other that showing aggression to the other puppies works to maintain access to that resource they wanted, It is only natural for these puppies to transfer that behaviour to people when homed.

One mistake many puppy owners make when confronted with their new puppy growling at them over the food bowl is to take the food bowl away from the puppy, in order to teach the puppy that the owner is the alfa and controls the food.

Unfortunately, this just works to confirm the puppy's fears that the owner is indeed a threat to their resource and is going to take it away

The puppy will up the ante and is likely feel even more defensive when approached again by a human but as the growling did not work on the previous occasion to keep the owner away from his food the puppy escalates their aggression up the levels and even biting in order to get the desired response of the owner backing away and letting the puppy eat his food in peace.

The same process can be applied to other resources such as comfortable resting places.

Rather than confronting these puppies with threatening, aggressive behaviour, it is much better to teach them that you are not a threat.

If you have just brought a new puppy home, then teach him that whenever you approach the food bowl more food appears.

Keep an empty bowl down and take a few pieces of your puppy's daily ration and drop them in his bowl as you pass from time to time

Your puppy will soon learn that people are definitely no threat to their food resource in fact they are the givers of nice things

Similarly, you should teach your puppy that you are not a threat to other resources such as toys and beds.

It is very important to teach your puppy "leave", "drop" and "off" commands in a way that the puppy is rewarded for giving up a valuable resource with an even higher value reward rather than punished for not giving it up. This will reduce the likelihood of the puppy feeling defensive around highly valued resources.

Copyright Gunfield 2017