



# Sussex Brighton and East Grinstead Branch

Registered Charity No. 206630

## RESOURCE GUARDING

### HOW TO PREVENT YOUR DOG FROM DEVELOPING RESOURCE GUARDING

#### WHY DO DOGS RESOURCE GUARD

There can be many reasons why a dog will guard and many different things that they can guard, including food, toys, people and rooms etc. Dogs can resource guard against people and other dogs and animals. It can often start with guarding against other animals in the home and, if left untreated, can progress onto the humans in the home. The most common reason dogs will guard toys and food, is that they have had things repeatedly taken away from them and they now feel the need to defend what is theirs. Other reasons they may resource guard, could be general anxiety and lack of choices, leading to them reacting in a way that they feel will give them more control of their environment and make them feel safer.

#### PREPARATION FOR TRAINING

You can help your dog by preparing some extra tasty treats – something they really like so they'll very much welcome you bringing it to them.

**STEP 1:** Calmly and quietly drop some treats near your dog while they are eating from their bowl. You don't need to say anything at all or go right up to them, because this might make them worry. Just approach gently and scatter a few treats onto the ground near your dog.

**STEP 2:** Once you've dropped the treats, walk right away again!

Your dog needs to understand they will be able to enjoy finishing their meal and having these additional bonus treats without any pressure at all.

**STEP 3:** Repeat this a couple of times a week when your dog is being fed from their bowl.

Through doing this over and over, your dog will be learning to look forward to you approaching them while they are eating and that there is no risk that you're coming to take anything away from them – because you're actually coming to make things even better for them!

**STEP 4:** Progress to dropping food into an empty bowl

For their next mealtime, as long as your dog appears comfortable and doesn't show signs of being worried when you have been approaching, place their bowl down completely empty. Take a handful of their normal food, walk over to the bowl and drop it in for your dog to eat. Walk straight away again, so there's absolutely no reason for them to become worried and as soon as they have finished, return and drop in another handful of food! They'll anticipate you approaching their bowl with good things happening as a result!

**STEP 5:** Practice swapping your dog's things

When your dog is playing with something that belongs to them, such as a toy or chew etc, get something they like even more than that –like some extra tasty treats – and offer this to your dog a little distance away from what they already have. They should be enticed to drop what they have and come to you to get their reward! Drop the treat on the floor a distance away and once they are safely away eating the treat, you can pick up whatever they had. Only do this a couple of times every now and then. When your dog comes back looking for what was taken, where it's safe to do so, give the item back, and if it is their own toy or bone/kong/chew etc, always give it back. This will help prevent our dogs getting wise to us and knowing that we are luring them away to take what they have, which will make it more difficult to lure them away from stuff that we can't give back, such as your slippers or the remote control! They'll be learning that it is a good idea to let go of things they are enjoying, because it means they'll be replaced with something even better!

**What to do if you're worried your dog already has a resource guarding problem**

Remember not to tell your dog off for guarding anything as you'll only add to their anxiety. If they have a toy or chew that they are guarding, simply leave them alone with it and don't approach. Only take things away when you absolutely have to for safety reasons and even then we should still be attempting to swap them out! If you are struggling you and your dog

would benefit from a professionally qualified and experienced behaviourist providing up to date advice on the gradual introduction of handling where a dog is showing a fearful response.

### **Extra help**

If you are struggling please get in touch with a qualified behaviourist. These can found by copying and pasting the following link into your web browser:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/general/findabehaviourist>