

Standard Prevention Exercises for All Non-Guarding Dogs and Puppies

Approach your dog while he is eating and add a bonus (something much more palatable than his food) to dish. Approach from all angles and at different points in meal and get others to do likewise. Hide bonus and add from pocket, pouch or behind your back so it is not “previewed.” If your dog is okay, lift his bowl to add bonus and then give it back.

This exercise is also a maintenance spot check for former guarders.

Signs of Guarding

- Accelerated eating
- Cessation of eating or “freezing up”
- Glassy or hard eyes
- Growling
- Lip lifting
- Snapping
- Biting

Rehab Exercise 1

- 1) At mealtime, put down empty food dish
- 2) Approach your dog and empty dish and add a few pieces of kibble
- 3) Withdraw and repeat until entire meal fed in this manner
- 4) If your dog guards end mealtime: “too bad”
- 5) Feed 2 to 3 meals this way
- 6) On 4th meal, gradually begin to reduce the time between approaches and increase the amount of kibble per installment so that an overlap develops: your dog is eating while you refill
- 7) When you have reached the point that you are giving meal in 2-3 installments without any guarding, switch to bonus-addition, as per prevention instructions above (adding bonus while eating and removing bowl to add bonus)

Rehab Exercise 2

- 1) Approach your dog while eating to “safety distance” (pre-guarding distance) and flip bonus at bowl (don’t worry about accuracy), repeating several times in a row
- 2) Do this for 2-3 meals
- 3) On 4th meal, decrease distance slightly after first flip
- 4) If successful (no guarding), continue gradually decreasing distance until you can approach his bowl and drop bonus in
- 5) Switch to prevention exercises

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If at any point the guarding is increasing or you feel unsafe please contact the Calgary Humane Society’s Behaviour Helpline at 723-6057. For further information, an excellent book by Jean Donaldson “Mine! A Practical Guide To Resource Guarding in Dogs” is available at the Calgary Humane Society store.