

Resource Guarding

General Advice

Please note - If your dog has bitten whilst guarding then you require a full behaviour consult and vet referral.

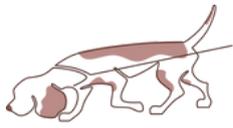
Resource guarding, in fact, a natural, normal canine behaviour.

However, it is an undesirable and potentially dangerous behaviour in our homes. Dogs guard resources because they fear losing them, but this can turn into a learnt behaviour.

Sometimes the fear is learned through experience; someone has been taking valuable resources away from the dog, from an early age.



Other dogs seem to be genetically predisposed to this and are "guardy" from a very early age. Breeds which are predisposed include cocker spaniels and cockerpoos.



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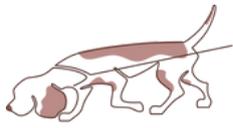
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Signs of guarding can include dog running away with what they are holding, turning their back when approached, freezing, looking tense, lowering their head, and opening eyes wide, hard stares, growling, snarling, snapping, or biting when approached. Make sure you check out the Ladder of Aggression handout!



It's important not to tell your dog off, or otherwise punish them for growling around their favoured resources. This could make them more fearful and more likely to react. We want them not to worry about the presence of you in these situations.



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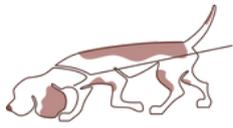
When our dogs take something, they should not have, it is easy to panic and try to snatch or steal the item back.

This is counter intuitive. By snatching items off our dogs, we teach them the item is something high value, something they want!

That can cause them to be more protective in the future and lead to issues with resource guarding.

Instead, the best thing to do when your dog takes something they should not have, is to get something of high value - a treat if one is nearby, or a toy. Make the thing you have the most exciting thing in the world. For a toy, wiggle it around on the floor, put on your best squeaky dog voice and proclaim "oh my! What have I got!?"





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Dogs are naturally inquisitive; they will wonder why what you have is so interesting and come over to see what you have.

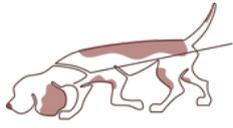
At this point, place the exciting treat/toy on the floor near them. When they go to eat it, they should naturally open their mouth and the item they previously stole will drop out. Hey presto! You have it back, and without having to have run laps of the garden, and without provoking any escalation up the ladder of aggression.

Doing a swap like this, is always worthwhile when you need to take something off your dog - then you are associated with exciting treats and toys, rather than the evil person who ruins their fun when they approach!



Think of it this way, if you were eating a pizza in a restaurant and a total stranger came up and took a slice then walked away, the next time they came over you'd be anxious and watching out for them stealing your pizza!

If, however they came over and offered you a free pudding off the menu, or £10 for the slice of pizza, you'd probably be much more likely to give up the slice of pizza and be happier the next time you saw them!



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It's important to prevent the dog from rehearsing the guarding behaviour.

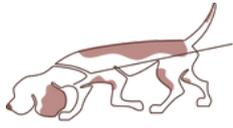
The more often they do it, the harder it will be to teach them not to.

For example, give chews only when your dog is securely in a separate room. Or give quickly consumed treats like a carrot, rather than a long-lasting chew. Tidy socks and clothes away so that they can't get hold of them.



If mistakes with management happen, do not try to retrieve any guarded object from your dog unless it is an emergency. If it is life or death (e.g., glass, cooked chicken bone), scatter high value food away from your dog and the item, but close enough that they can see.

When they go to the first scatter of food, scatter some a bit further away. Move your dog in this manner until you can close a door between you or have a safe distance. Pick up the item calmly and remove it from the dog's sight as quickly as possible. Scatter two more rounds of food afterwards as we know that dogs can be frustrated by this prized possession being removed.



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Final Thoughts:

Resource Guarding can have underlying health components. If your dog has reached the stage in their guarding where they have bitten someone, or you have felt scared by their behaviour then please book an initial behaviour consult for support with this. This will require you to visit your vet for a vet referral and full health check.

Some cases referred to Nose to Trail in the last year have included:

- Phantom pregnancy
- Persistent Phantom Pregnancy
- Elbow dysplasia
- Arthritis
- Gastrointestinal discomfort
- Giardia infection

Resource Guarding is dangerous and while this guide is here to help you, it is generic information and 121 support is often required for these cases.

If you need help please contact:

info@nosetotrail.co.uk