

Identifying and Managing Food Guarding In Shelter Dogs



Agenda

- Identifying aggression
- Distinguishing food aggression from possession aggression
- Overview of the research
- Overview of the food guarding protocol

All different ways...



Identify Aggression

- Aggression - encompasses a range of behaviors that usually begins with warnings and can culminate in an attack.



Not Temperament Test

- ASPCA SAFER[®] is assessment
- Snapshot of current behavior with a narrow lens on aggression
- Score (1-5) reveals:
 - resources needed for placement
 - probability of aggression

ASPCA SAFER™

- Behavior score for each item
 - “1 & 2” low likelihood of aggression
 - “3” potential behavior modification
 - “4 & 5” growling and/or attempts to bite

Scoring Food

Learn more on Scoring webinar from SAFER series

scoring:

	Dog lifts head and ceases eating when you reach to pull the bowl away or push him out. [Enter "1"]
	Dog calmly allows the food to be moved, follows the dish, but does not interfere with the dish's movement. Dog's body is soft and loose, eyes soft, tail neutral. He lifts his head when hand is pushed against his cheek. [Enter "1"]
	Dog follows the dish with his tail down, body likely a bit stiff. Dog lifts head after a bit of pressure from hand to cheek. [Enter "2"]
	Dog follows the dish, his tail between his legs, ears are forward. His body is stiff. Dog does not lift his head from the bowl when hand is applied to his cheek. [Enter "3"]
	Dog gulps food, begins to eat faster and with bigger bites, body stiff. He does not lift head when hand is applied to cheek. [Enter "3"]
	Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter "4"]
	Dog tries to bite. (Use chart on the worksheet to identify level of bite attempt/bite.) [Enter "5"]



What is happening with food guarders in shelters?

Survey of Shelters

- Shelters reported food guarding was one of top reasons dogs were not eligible for adoption
- 14% of dogs in shelters show food guarding behavior during an assessment

Survey of Shelters

- 92% of shelters assess for food aggression
- Only 34% attempted behavior modification
- 51% made no attempt to offer food guarders for adoption



Possession Aggression does NOT equal Food Aggression!



**Could it just be about the VALUE
of the resource?**



It all started with Bobbi...

Food Guarding Behavior



Getting Ready for Adoption



In Adoption



Food Modification in Shelter

- If staff and resources permit, b-mod sessions before going to adoption
 - Free feed in shelter
 - Trade up
 - Enrichment
- Utilize fosters
 - Observe behavior change
 - B-mod in foster
 - Adopt out directly

Reviewing the Shelter Protocol

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



food guarding program

The goal is to have the dog learn to be relaxed around the food bowl, lifting his head and even backing up from the bowl when you approach.

<http://www.aspcapro.org/behavior-modification.php>

What Modification Looks Like: Billy



Success for B-Mod

- Sessions 1-2 daily (5-10 min)
- Baby steps
- Stay at level until dog invites you to next step
- Log/track every session
- Enrichment
- Free feeding
- Consider foster
- Adopter support & follow-up

For the Adopter (download from ASPCApro.org)

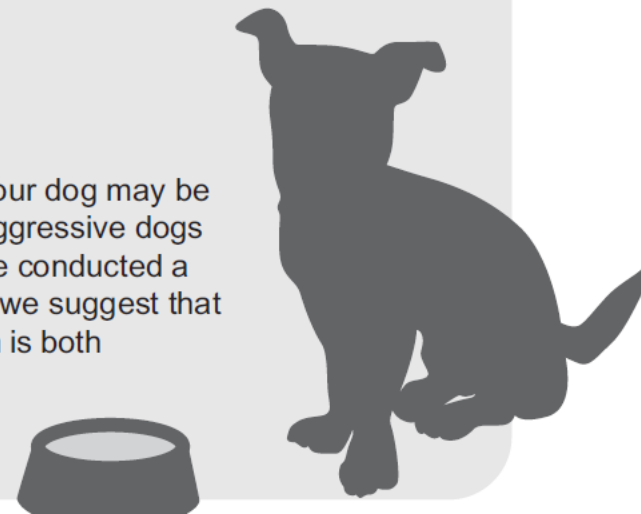
food program

ASPCA[®]

Congratulations!

You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some food aggression issues while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to show aggression around his food than some other dogs. Food-aggressive dogs may bite when they perceive that someone is trying to take their food. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog during his time with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Food aggression is both treatable and controllable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



Adopter Protocol

- Mealtime is not an event
- Avoid conflict around bowl
- Sit before bowl goes down
- Small amounts in bowl at time- then adding more
- Dropping high value food treat into food bowl
- Trading toys
- Foraging device daily

Adopt without B-Mod!

- Don't have qualified staff/vols, time, or foster available?
- Some dogs can be placed in adoption if adopters given support
- Recent publication in ANIMALS
- <http://www.aspcapro.org/food-guarding-a-very-modifiable-behavior.php>

Food Aggression Research

- Wisconsin Humane Society (2004)
- Followed 96 dogs with food guarding during assessment
- No aggression on all other SAFER items (1&2's)



Food Aggression Research

- Scores of 3-5 around food bowl during assessment were included:
 - Stiffening or freezing
 - Gulping
 - Growling or other vocalizations
 - Biting the fake hand

Food Aggression Research

- Exclusions from study:
 - Under 6 months of age
 - Placed body between assessor and bowl
 - Multiple bites up fake hand
 - Aggression to toys or non-food items



Food Aggression Research

- In-shelter:
 - Free fed
 - Enrichment
 - No b-mod sessions involving a food bowl
- 96 dogs sent home on food program
- Phone survey follow up 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months

Results

- Six adopters (6%) reported guarding first 3 weeks, only 1 to food bowl
 - By 3 months those dog not guarding



Results

Dog	3 day	3 week	3 month
Dog 1	Growl when rawhide taken	Growl when rawhide taken	No guarding
Dog 2	Guards food, toy, & objects: returned	n/a	n/a
Dog 3	Growl when a tennis ball or rawhide taken	Growl when a tennis ball taken	No guarding
Dog 4	Unable to reach adopter	Growl when plastic bone was taken	Unable to reach adopter
Dog 5	No guarding	Growled once over a rubber toy	Some separation anxiety: no guarding
Dog 6	No guarding	No guarding	Growl when rawhide taken away

Results

- At 3 months, 1 new case of guarding rawhide (but not food bowl)
- Bonded! Returns were 5% (9% for dogs not in study)



Nate in Shelter



Nate in Shelter Recovered



Nate at Home



Support

Essential for all dogs (with and without b-mod):

- Adopter education pre-adoption
- Follow-up and support post-adoption
- Go home on food program

We can save more lives!



Use Fosters!

- Not just for behavior modification!
- Adoption Ambassador program
 - Foster home finds adopter
 - Avoids dog coming back to shelter for adoption
 - Adopter has more information about dog in home environment

<http://www.aspcapro.org/adoption-ambassadors-foster-program.php>

More Data!

- Interested in this program?
- Contact us!
 - Support for baseline data and progress
- heather.mohan-gibbons@aspca.org
- safer@aspca.org

Resources!

- **Behavior modification**

<http://www.aspcapro.org/behavior-modification.php>

- **Food program videos**

<http://www.aspcapro.org/behavior-modification-in-action.php>

- **Publication**

<http://www.aspcapro.org/food-guarding-a-very-modifiable-behavior.php>

- **Adoption Ambassadors**

<http://www.aspcapro.org/adoption-ambassadors-foster-program.php>