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| **Resource Guarding** |
| **Food Guarding**To prevent development of resource guarding, teach your dog to tolerate the presence of people and other animals around his food bowl, toys, bed and other things he might regard as having high value.Teach your dog to trade good stuff for better stuff, then give him the original good stuff back. You want him to respond positively to your approach.Note: If you sense your dog might show real aggression, don't wait for a bite incident; enlist the help of a behavior specialist without delay.\* Manage the environment until the behavior has been modified. Remove all potential guarding triggers. Don't leave food bowls, even empty ones, on the floor. Put toys away. Provide them only in controlled circumstances.\* Relocate your dog's feeding area to a low-traffic area.\* Spend 2 to 4 weeks pre-conditioning your dog. Feed 2 to 3 times a day, placing his bowl in a confined feeding room. Bring him to the room, leave and close door until he's finished eating.\* Attend a positive training class using treats your dog likes as rewards.\* Implement a "Say Please" (or "Nothing in Life is Free") program in which your dog has to earn all good things. Sit or lie down to get food, treats, toys, walks, and outside playtime.\* Exercise him more. A tired dog is usually a well-behaved one. Mental games also help engage the dog and improve behavior.\* Identify, and avoid, situations that trigger aggression.\* Teach your dog to trade items on cue.\* Don't punish your dog if a food guarding or other aggressive incident occurs. Punishment usually elicits confusion and more aggression, and reinforces his association that someone near his food bowl is bad.**Resource Guarding**There are dogs who growl and snap when approached while chewing a toy, eating or lying on a favorite spot. These dogs are guarding what they consider to be a valuable resource. That's why this type of behavior can be called "resource guarding."First of all, remove anything he may protect. If you can't remove the item (such as a bed or couch), block access to it by closing a door or putting up a gate. Keep him on lead in the house so you can more easily control him. Teach him to "Leave It" in a positive, fun way. Do NOT make this into a battle. Make him think this command is an opportunity for a reward, not a chance to lock horns with you. Always start teaching this command with boring objects so that praise and treats will be the obvious choice. Reward spitting things out. Much of this sort of aggression is man made. People get angry when their dog takes things, then fail to give him a way to please them. They create a situation where, once something is in their dog's mouth, there is no way for the dog to win. This can force the dog to start defending himself.\* Here's the rule: Once something is in your dog's mouth, it is TOO LATE to teach him not to take it. The only thing you can teach him now is to spit it out promptly. Therefore, reward spitting it out.\* Take then Give. Early on, practice "Out" with your pup. Walk up when he is chewing a toy. Say "Out" and take the toy. Praise him for his brilliance. Give him a treat. Return the toy and leave him alone. A few weeks of this once or twice a day and your dog will want you to come and take him toys.\* Ignore him. Do not look at or speak to him unless he is working for you and even then, keep attention short, sweet and intense after which you ignore him again. You want him to want your attention, not constantly be getting more of it then he desires. Leave him wanting more.\* Redirect him. If he is pawing you then keep him on lead and work his demanding self. Every time he paws you have him "Sit, down, Sit, down -- come, stay, OK" -- with little praise. He may well decide that a nap is a better idea.\* Teach him to move out of the way. This will help with his understanding that you lead and he follows. If it is safe to do, simply shuffle your feet into him (no kicking) until he moves then praise him. Or leave a lead on him and guide out of the way then praise.\* He owns nothing! He has no "favorite" chair or toys that are "his" -- everything in the house is yours. If he is protective over anything, a bowl or a toy, remove it until his attitude has improved.\* All of his time must be spent on the floor. The higher up he is in the room, the higher up he is in his head. Nope, his place is on the floor. Teach him to get off things on command. Always praise him cheerfully for obeying. If need be, close off rooms and/or leave a lead on him so you can manage him more easily. Always praise him cheerfully for obeying --- that is important!\* Confine him daily. Daily crating can help keep this sort of dog out of trouble. Even if you are home with him, crate him for several hours every day. [*Note: Do not crate a dog more than 5 hours a day; any longer can be detrimental to behavior and mental development.*]\* Increase his exercise. This is a great deal of change for him. Exercise will help relieve stress and release excess energy. Be sure to play games that promote cooperation and control -- skip tug-of-war, wrestling and chasing after him. |