

FOOD REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Have you witnessed your dog display aggressive behaviors around his/her food bowl or during feeding time? If so, you and your dog would probably benefit from a food rehabilitation program. Dogs that have food aggression may bite when they think that someone is going to take or touch their food. Due to these issues, we strongly suggest that you follow the training techniques listed below. Food aggression is treatable and controllable.

STEPS TO TAKE:

- I. **Feeding time should not be a time for high energy levels.** Do not get your dog overly excited and riled up. You should only give your dog food or treats if he/she is in a calm state of mind.

- II. **Ask your dog to sit and wait for food.** Keep your dog on a leash for this exercise. Have your dog sit and then ask him/her to wait. Bend forward to place the bowl on the floor. If your dog gets up, stand straight up and, again, ask the dog to sit. To give a verbal correction you could say “Eh” when the dog breaks the sitting position. Repeat the steps until your dog lets you place the bowl down without moving toward it.

- III. **Consider purchasing a raised feeder for your dog.** A raised feeder will keep your dog in a more neutral, relaxed body position while eating. If your dog has to bend over with his/her head, neck, chest pointing towards the ground, they are then in a hovering position. A dog that is guarding will hover over a resource they find valuable. You want to work on avoiding this body posture during feeding time.

- IV. **Teach your dog to leave the food bowl by offering something even better than their dry food.** You can do this by giving them their food and let them eat for a moment. Walk over with a treat or a tasty piece of cheese. Then, say the dog’s name and when/if their head is lifted from the bowl, praise him/her and give the highly desirable food item. You could use the “look” command before offering the food item. ***Never attempt to take the food bowl away from your dog when they are eating. Always offer something of higher value if you have to retrieve something from your dog.***

If you have behavioral questions you would like to discuss, please contact HSHA’s Behavior Team at (717)564-3320 ext.118 or see the list of area dog trainers.



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