



Resource Guarding Issues

Adapted from original article by Karen Overall 2008

Object Guarding

Keep a journal and make a laundry list of items your dog is guarding. Some dogs guard their stuffed toys, rawhide chews, pigs ears, bully sticks, marrow bones or other highly prized special toys or treats. Determine an hierarchy of value on items your dog is guarding listing the lowest or least likely to guard moving up to the most highly valued and most likely to guard. Do not allow your dog to have access to toys or treats at the top of his guarding hierarchy for now.

Hand feed all meals. Do not offer your dog highly desirable items you feel the dog will guard. Do not allow your children to be around the dog when he has a toy or treat that the dog is likely to guard. Management is critical in keeping children in the home safe and preventing your dog from having the opportunity to be successful with his resource guarding.

HANDLING ISSUES:

Dogs should be trained to leave areas by vocal and hand signal, rather than reaching for them or attempting to displace them manually. Cooperative compliance is appropriately rewarded with verbal praise, food rewards or by providing the dog with activities it enjoys (going for a walk or play). The dog will eventually acquire a something really good is going to happen to me expectation whenever the owner approaches. TARGETING is an excellent way to move dogs without touching them.

HANDLING DESENSITIZATION to collar grabs and touch.

Dogs that run off and guard objects should not be chased or challenged when they possess objects. The best treatment for this problem is prevention. Dogs that refuse to exchange an object for a treat can often be enticed to move away from the object by ringing a doorbell, shaking a set of car keys or picking up a leash.

SKILLS NECESSARY for Behavior Modification for possession aggression:

- Attention conditioning
- Sit stay
- Down stay
- Wait
- Leave It
- Trade
- Teach a BACK UP so the dog will learn to back away from items.
- Teach LEAVE IT
- Teach TRADE

With the foundation skills of attention and impulse control the object guarding dog is first trained to take and then release various objects in exchange for a treat.

- Teach the dog to take and release a neutral item.
- Offer the dog a low level interest item.
- Offer the dog a yummy treat.
- After dog eats the treat, cue him to sit and then return the item to the dog.

KAREN OVERALL'S PROTOCOLS FOR POSSESSION AGGRESSION

I strongly recommend that folks only do these exercises with a professional.

The goals of this program twofold: by decreasing the dog's anxiety if it is inappropriately guarding/protecting an object, it is hoped the dog will learn to relax and be less anxious when presented with the object, and finally, minimization of any danger to any person who may come in contact the dog when it is protecting the object. When dogs learn to behave appropriately, they become safer.

Before starting this tier of the behavior modification program the dog must have successfully completed the Protocol for deference (NILF, Rank Reduction) and Protocol for Relaxation

USE AN OBJECT OF NO INTEREST TO THE DOG such as a paperweight or a rock outdoors

Ask the dog to sit and stay or down and stay, and relax, and then place the object about 2 to 3 feet from the dog so the dog can see the object. Reward the dog for relaxing. Instruct the dog to stay; then pick up and quickly return the object.

TETHER THE DOG

Place object on the floor 10 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 9 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 8 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 7 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 6 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 5 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 4 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 3 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 2 ½ feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 2 feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 1 ½ feet away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 1 foot away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor 6 inches away from the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor right in front of the dog; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

Place object on the floor touching the dog's feet; briefly retrieve and replace the object.

FOR FUTURE REPETITIONS

Repeat all tasks in different locations.

Repeat all tasks with all family members.

Repeat all tasks with only every second or third task being rewarded with a treat (Remember praise!)

Repeat with only intermittent treat reinforcement. (Remember praise!).