



# Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

## Golden Rule Training

### Preventing Food Guarding in Your Puppy

Puppies are very impressionable because they have no frame of reference, so it is the best time to reinforce good behaviors and prevent bad ones. Puppies can learn obedience cues, positive play with humans and appropriate behavior as early as 8 weeks old; however, they can just as easily learn negative behaviors and habits if we inadvertently reinforce them.

If your puppy is starting to show signs of food guarding by growling when you get too close to his food, or when you take a toy from him, it is a good time to break him of this behavior. Guarding can evolve into a serious aggression problem as the puppy grows into an adult dog, so early prevention is the key to solving this behavior.

#### Dos and Don'ts

**Do:** Try feeding your dog in small installments. Feed him, then take the bowl away to add more food. Repeating this 3-4 times until his meal is finished. Again, this exercise helps build positive associations as your dog soon learns that when the bowl is taken away, it is going to be returned with more food.

**Do:** Walk close to your puppy while he is eating. Stand next to him and let him get used to having people in close proximity to his food bowl.

**Do:** Place small pieces of high value treats (chicken, cheese, hotdog, etc) into his food bowl while he's munching. This will create a positive association with a hand coming close to his food dish.

**Do:** Pet your pup gently while he is eating to get him comfortable with the feeling of being touched while he is eating.

**Do:** Teach him "take then give" and practice "out" with your pup. Walk up when he is chewing a toy and say, "out" and then take the toy and praise him for his brilliance. Give him a treat. Return the toy and walk away. A few weeks of this once or twice a day and your dog will want you to come and take his toys.

**Do:** Seek help from a qualified dog trainer if your dog is exhibiting aggressive guarding signs around the food bowl. This can turn into a very serious issue quickly, so seek professional help right away!

**Do not:** Take his dish away from him while he is eating. This compounds his belief that you are there to take his food; he is more likely to eat quickly or react negatively the next time.

**Do not:** Allow children (or anyone else) to annoy your puppy while he is eating. While we want your dog to be trustworthy, he does have a right to eat in peace.

**Do not:** Let your pup make a mad dash for the bowl and start eating before you set it down. Teach him the “sit” and “wait” commands and give him an “OK” signal before he gets to eat (for instructions to teach “sit”, “wait” and “okay” see the Golden Rule Training articles at [www.homewardboundgoldens.org](http://www.homewardboundgoldens.org)).

Source:

[www.dogguide.net/food-guarding.php](http://www.dogguide.net/food-guarding.php)