



# The WoofGang Wag Rag



Vol. 10 No. 6

JUNE 2010

Free

## Learning to Share

In the wild, resource guarding, which means protecting food or a possession, is a necessary behavior that assures an individual's survival. In fact, each member of a wolf pack has rightful ownership of resources within his "space", beneath his head and between his feet. Though another can try to steal or use intimidation to take the prized possession, every wolf, regardless of rank, can rightfully defend his "stuff". The problem is that, for the canine member of a human family, this is an undesirable and very dangerous behavior.

### Sharing Resources

Your dog needs to learn that having people around his food and resources is a good thing – in fact, that people have the Midas touch, making things *more* valuable by their contact with his things.

### Around the Food Bowl

To prevent guarding of food, start by hand-feeding your pup his kibble. This will teach him that all good things in life come from you.

Also, dangle your fingers in the bowl as he eats. With each handful, drop something in his bowl better than what he's eating. The deposit of a little sliver of chicken or cheese will make you a welcome presence around his bowl rather than a threat.



Madison guarding a chewy

If your dog shows *any* signs of discomfort – stiffening, freezing, a hard eye, growling – then stop! This is a dog's natural way of communicating, so *do not punish him for his warning*. In fact, if you reprimand him for expressing his discomfort, you are forcing him to

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## About the Trainer

Dog trainer **LAURA GARBER**, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



### Introductory Training Offer

Get an extra 30 minutes of training when you purchase a 4-session training package.

(Offer details based on location.)

Call **WOOFGANG** at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

### Talkin' Trash on the Street

Dogs who lunge and bark at passing dogs on the street are usually doing so due to fear or anxiety. Giving your dog a correction for her behavior tends to make it worse. A more effective approach is to change her feelings about other dogs from one of fear to one of happy anticipation!

Call **WOOFGANG** at **646.345.5116** for help with your trash-talkin' pooch.

### Separation Distress

Even when you're at home, it's important that your dog spends some time away from you. Otherwise she can develop separation distress when she's left alone. The crate is a great place for her to get some quality alone-time. **WOOFGANG** can guide you in helping your dog get more comfortable when she's without you.

### ***Learning to Share (cont.)***

escalate his expression – next time, he will have to bite! Instead, consider ways in which you can make him more comfortable with your presence.

To gain your guardy dog's ease with you around his food bowl, make approaches to his bowl, stopping at a distance where he shows *no* discomfort or guarding behavior, and then toss something of higher value than what he's eating. Withdraw and approach over and over again, each time stopping at a distance from him where he does not feel threatened or uncomfortable. Over time, you will notice him lifting his head in expectation of you approach. This means he is now looking forward to your approaches with happy anticipation and that he no longer feels unease (at this distance, anyway)! Now you may be able to move ever so gradually closer to his bowl on your approaches, every time making sure that he remains calm and accepting of your presence.

### ***Sharing Possessions***

To make your dog happy about surrendering things to you, teach her the *drop it* command. If she has guarded resources in the past, then you should put away anything she's likely to guard while you work at gaining her trust in sharing with you. Start by working with items that are of low value in her hierarchy of possessions (things she doesn't care much about). As she becomes more comfortable about relinquishing these items to you, you can gradually work up to things of greater value to her.

### ***Tips for Staying Safe with a Guarder***

- Take precautions to keep people safe: confine the dog in a crate or another room if he has resources he might guard; otherwise the environment should be cleared of all possible resources.
- Resource guarding tends to be relationship-based. What this means is that a dog may guard resources from one person but not another. More to the point, when one person has done work to gain the dog's trust around food and resources, the same work must be done with the other family members; the learning the dog has done does not simply "transfer" from one person to the next. This also means that, while the dog may become comfortable with family members being near his stuff, he may have grave issues with visitors being near his stuff.
- Keep in mind that dogs who guard their resources are particularly dangerous in families with children. There is no telling when a child may reach for an item that the dog considers his. Or a child or young visitor to the family may carelessly drop a hot dog and, in reaching for it, get bitten by the dog. You should seriously consider whether your family will be safe with a dog who guards his resources.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



### ***ASK WOOFIE...***

*Woofie, we are waiting to get out new corgi puppy. She looks very sweet. I am a little worried, however, that she is one of the more "outgoing" personalities. Do you think that means that she's going to be hyper or aggressive? Outgoing can sometimes be a euphemism in the pet world. I have no idea if you can tell if a pup is going to be "aggressive" at 8 weeks, or what even makes a dog "aggressive". Kathleen*

***Hiya, Kathleen!*** First, remember that shy puppies who are too fearful can act aggressively, too. It's called fear-based aggression. So aggression is not only the potential outcome of assertive puppies.

*To answer your question, there's no way to predict future behavior. There are puppy behavioral evaluations that can be done, but even evaluations cannot predict future behavior. They can only take the behavioral temperature of the dog on that given day at that given moment.*

*The point is, if you start training right away and socializing your puppy to all of the things that will be part of her lifescape, that is the best you can do. Just as with parenting children, all you can do is your best, guide them the right ways and expose them to the right things, protect them from the wrong things, and the rest just happens. Then you will respond to whatever comes along.*

*Hope this helps!... Woofie*



*Though her name means "fortunate" in Sanskrit, Shiva might be wondering why she has not been fortunate enough to find her forever home yet. If you'd like to share deep, soulful gazes, belly rubs and sunny walks with this beautiful girl, visit her at the Liberty Humane Society.*