

RESOURCE GUARDING IN GREYHOUNDS

Resource guarding in greyhounds is not uncommon. It refers to situations where a dog shows defensive or protective behaviour around items or spaces they consider valuable, such as food and water bowls, bedding, kennels, toys, or resting areas. It is often described as the canine equivalent of “don’t touch my stuff.”

Greyhounds are typically raised with their littermates in a group setting until approximately 20 weeks of age. After this period, they may continue to be group housed or kept in pairs through to their pre-training stage. During these early stages, dogs may need to share resources such as food, water, bedding, and toys.



Once greyhounds enter training and racing, they are generally transitioned to individual housing. At this stage, they are provided with their own food and water bowls, bedding, and belongings, and are no longer required to share resources.

Resource guarding is a natural, instinctive behaviour in dogs, as they are biologically predisposed to protect valuable resources such as food, water, and safe resting areas. While it can be managed and modified through appropriate training and handling, it should always be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

With the correct approach, resource guarding can often be improved through training by teaching the dog that human presence near valued resources is positive and rewarding rather than threatening.

Before beginning any training, it is recommended to seek guidance from a veterinarian, qualified dog trainer, your adoption organisation, or GAP.

Management and training strategies

- Ensure your greyhound has a designated safe space where they can rest undisturbed. Food, water, and treats should initially be provided in this area. If resource guarding is present, this space should be kept free from children and other pets.
- Teach a reliable “give” or “trade” cue. Begin with low-value items and reward your greyhound with a high-value treat when they willingly release an item. Once the interaction is complete, the item can be returned. This helps the dog learn that giving up resources results in a positive outcome. Children should only participate in this training under strict adult supervision.

- Build positive associations with human approach. Start by approaching your greyhound while they have a low-value item and calmly deliver a treat, then walk away. Repeat this regularly, gradually increasing the value of the item over time as the dog remains relaxed. The goal is to teach the greyhound that human presence near resources predicts something positive.
- Progress gradually and at the dog's pace. If at any stage your greyhound shows signs of discomfort or stress, reduce the difficulty and return to a previous step. Over time, this process can be extended to different environments and include additional people once the greyhound is comfortable.

