

# behavior modification protocols



## food guarding program

The goal is to have the dog lift his head and even back up from his bowl when you approach.

### identifying dogs for the program:

- Dog is MYM SAFER™ “1” or “2” on all parts of the MYM SAFER™ assessment other than the food behavior.
- The dog does not display overt signs of dominance.
- The dog does not body-block, place foot in bowl, or urinate in bowl.
- The dog was assessed with two toys and no possession-type behaviors were observed.

### before you begin:

- Be sure the dogs are given enrichment and walks daily.
- All dogs entering the food program should be on free feed (access to a full bowl of food at all times) for at least 24 hours before starting this program. Dogs must be free fed consistently. If they are not on free feed, the protocol is much less likely to be effective.

### program instructions:

1. Give dog some mildly valuable food such as a dry kibble that is a bit tastier than what he has as free feed. Prepare some tasty treats (balled up canned food works well). Approach the food bowl; and as long as he is not aggressive (i.e. stiffening, hard stare, guarding bowl), drop in a treat. If he displays aggressive behaviors, wait until he is done; and next time decrease the value of the food in his bowl.
2. After 5-7 repetitions, you can now expect him to lift his head when you approach — even just a tiny bit — before dropping in the next treat.
3. When he is reliably lifting his head for food, you will begin to bend down, as if to lift his bowl, and then drop the treat. Watch carefully for stiff behavior.
4. Increase the amount you bend.
5. At this point, you should now be able to take the bowl and exchange for something better.
6. Practice with at least two other Assessors, in two other physical spaces before the dog is placed on the adoption floor. In other words, the dog should be tested in at least four different spaces (one being his home kennel) by a total of three or more people.
7. Daily behavior logs must be kept for each dog on the program.

All dogs placed for adoption from this program must be clearly identified so adopters can be properly counseled, go home with the food-guarding program and be flagged for follow-up. Plan on a minimum of two 4-5 minute sessions a day.

**when the dog is adopted:** Review the “Food Program” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.

### food program

**MYM**  
MEET YOUR MATCH  
SAFER™  
ASPCA IAMS®

**Congratulations!**  
You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displays some food aggression behaviors while in this shelter. What does this mean? It means that your dog may be more likely to show aggression toward the food than some other dogs. Food aggression may also mean that your dog is more likely to guard his food. While we understand a behavioral assistance specialist's concern with the dog guarding his bowl with us, we request that you continue to work with the dog when you take him home. Food aggression is both treatable and manageable. We request you follow the plan below beginning this morning.

**the plan:**

- **Food times should never be made into an event.** Do not get the dog that up for dinner.
- **Be sure your dog eats and waits for the food bowl.** For the first few days, you might want to keep the hand on the dog for this exercise. As the dog eats, you will bend toward the dog with the bowl. If the dog lifts his head up and looks at the dog's handler.
- **Put small amounts of food in the bowl.** As the dog finishes the first bite, place one more food in the bowl. Feed him or her several small amounts of food, but do not eat small amounts.
- **Feed one-half of the dog's food out of a food-dispensing toy such as the Buster Cube™** This will not only help with food issues, but it will also help keep your dog busy in his or her mind.
- **When your dog is interacting with the food-dispensing toy or eating food from the bowl, you can teach him that when he leaves the bowl or dog to look at you, he will get something even better.** This is a very important and fun exercise! Begin by putting a kibble in the bowl or food-dispensing toy. Use the dog's name. If he lifts his head, cross him and give him the food item.
- **Trade.** While the game is similar to what is written above, but here you are not only asking the dog to lift his head, but to let you choose one object for another more desirable one. Place a really treat, such as the dog's bowl or your pocket, and begin by giving the dog a boring toy — like that the dog looks only marginally interesting. With each time you let the dog to choose the game as well as avoid any aggression, so we must begin by giving the dog something that is marginally desirable. Once the dog has his bowl for a moment, take the toy out of your pocket and carry away. Then, “Can the dog trade you with the bowl, and let him choose the treat when you pick up the boring toy. If he trades to have with the bowl, take him to your favorite place to sit. We hope your dog to learn that you always have something better and that he can trade you.

If you are unable to do the previously mentioned, we suggest you discuss another dog's adoption with us. We have 1200 potential puppies for adoption, research their show their dogs who display food issues in the shelter. We want to help to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you to talk and let the dog to have the opportunity to be able to trade through the issue. Please make the time, work yourself if you are ready to take an act of support!