FOOD BOWL TRAINING – CHEAT SHEET

FOR A DOG WITH FOOD AGGRESSION

TRAINING SESSIONS: Progress through the following steps, as long as the dog and trainer are relaxed, comfortable, and are enjoying the exercise. At each step, the trainer should occasionally say the dog's name or get its attention with a soft noise and reward with a treat, to ensure that the dog is interested in the training exercises and willing to leave the food bowl.
For more information, please refer to "Food Bowl Training Detailed Version."

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Trainer remains stationary and tosses treat immediately adjacent to the dog's food bowl.
  Gradually toss the treat further and further away from the food bowl, to a maximum of six to ten feet.

- Trainer walks around the room while tossing the treat immediately adjacent to the dog's food bowl.
  Gradually toss the treat further and further away from the dog's food bowl, to a maximum of six to ten feet.

- Trainer starts picking up bowl when the dog is moving toward the treat (that was tossed six to ten feet away from the bowl).

- Trainer intermittently (and then consistently) requires that the dog 'sit' in order to gain access to food bowl again.

- Trainer gradually begins to pick up bowl when tossing treat closer distances to the bowl.

- While the dog is eating, the trainer lures the dog's head away from the bowl with treat and picks up the bowl while feeding a treat from the other hand.

- While the dog is eating, the trainer cues the dog to sit, and picks up the bowl while the dog is sitting and then immediately returns the bowl to the dog (and releases the dog from sit).

Next levels of training:
- Practice with the same item (i.e., dry food), in different rooms/locations.
- Practice with a more valuable type of food
- Practice with different people.
- Practice in 'real life', at mealtimes.

CENTER FOR
Shelter Dogs
A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

FOOD BOWL TRAINING (DETAILED)

For a dog with food aggression

GOAL: To teach the food aggressive dog to behave in a friendly or neutral manner to people around a food bowl. The dog should learn that the food bowl is NOT a source of stress or conflict, and that good things happen when people are near the bowl.

GENERAL RULES:

- Evaluate the dog to find two to three different types of treats that the dog LOVES.

- Begin training exercises with dry dog food (or lower value food).

- Training session should last 5 to 10 minutes, and should occur once to twice daily at mealtimes.

- The dog should NOT be stressed by your presence. If the dog is stressed, you need to be farther away from the dog and/or need a lower value food in the bowl.

- If the dog is not interested in the game or shows signs of stress, modify your training plan, or end the session and try again later.

- If the dog demonstrates stiff body posture, shows teeth, growls, snaps, attempts to bite or bites, allow the dog to HAVE what it is guarding. Immediately, slowly and calmly move away from the dog and end the session.

- In each new training session, always begin at a much easier step than you ended on in the previous session. A dog's tendency to be possessive may vary from day to day.

- Every time you make the game more challenging (change the game AT ALL, i.e., working with a new person, starting to move around after only doing sessions while sitting), you must decrease the difficulty of the task (make it less stressful for the dog to willingly leave the food).

- Throughout these exercises, occasionally toss or drop a treat directly into the bowl (to teach the dog that when a hand is a approaching, it is bringing good things).

- Progress at the dog's comfort level. Depending on the dog's possessiveness, you may progress through all the steps during your first training session, or it may take a 30 sessions to safely and successfully get through them.

- While doing these sessions, you may wish desensitize and counter-condition the dog to the fake hand used in testing by presenting the fake hand to the food bowl (with a valuable treat in its hand) four to five times, toward the end of a session.

CENTER FOR
Shelter Dogs
A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

TRAINING SESSIONS

1. Train the dog to 'sit' before you give the dog the food bowl.

2. Give the dog the food bowl with dry food in it, and allow the dog to settle in to eating the food.

3. Always trade the item that the dog is potentially possessive of for something that the dog considers of higher value (TASTY treats).

4. As long as the dog and trainer are relaxed, comfortable and are enjoying the session, progress through the following step(s). At each step, the trainer should occasionally say the dog's name or get its attention with a soft noise and reward with a treat, to ensure that the dog is interested in the training exercises and willing to leave the bowl. It may take one session to progress through all of these steps or it may take thirty; progress at the dog's comfort level.

   - Trainer remains stationary and tosses treat immediately adjacent to the dog's food bowl.

   - Gradually toss the treat further and further away from the bowl, to a maximum of six to ten feet.

   - Trainer walks around the room while tossing the treat immediately adjacent to the dog's bowl.

   - Gradually toss the treat further and further away from the dog's bowl, to a maximum of six to ten feet.

   - Trainer starts picking up bowl when the dog is moving toward the treat that was tossed six to ten feet away from the bowl.

   - Trainer intermittently (and then consistently) requires that the dog 'sit' in order to gain access to food bowl again.

   - Trainer gradually begins to pick up bowl when tossing treat closer distances to the bowl.

   - While the dog is eating the trainer lures the dog's head away from the bowl with treat and picks up the bowl while feeding a treat from the other hand.

   - While the dog is eating, the trainer cues the dog to sit, and picks up the bowl while the dog is sitting and then immediately returns the bowl to the dog (and releases the dog from sit).

5. Next levels of training:

   - Practice with the same item (i.e., dry food), in different rooms/locations.

   - Practice with a more valuable type of food

   - Practice with different people.

   - Practice in 'real life', at mealtimes.

ADVANCED/OPTIONAL EXERCISES: AFTER YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ALL STEPS ABOVE

- Pet the dog while it is eating, initially with the fake hand and subsequently with your real hand.

    A. Pet with one stroke and then give the dog a treat.

    B. Praise while you are petting

- Put your hand in the bowl while the dog is eating.

    A. Initially with a treat in your hand, and eventually without a treat in your hand (treat is a reward instead of a lure)

- Perform these exercises with different people (starting at first 'step' of training session, above).

ASSESSING PROGRESS

- Re-evaluate the dog with the Match-Up II Behavior Evaluation once a month.

- Assess the dog's progress during training sessions on a daily basis based on the questions below. Signs of progress are: lower numbers (1 – 5) on questions 2, 3, and 4.

- Complete the following questions, after every session:

    1. Did the dog maintain interest in the item for the majority of the session?
    a.   Yes
    b.   No

    2. Rate the dog's severity of possessiveness of the item (1 – 5). Pick the option on the rating scale that most closely corresponds to the most severe behavior seen during the training session.
        1 = no possessiveness
        2 = moves away with item
        3 = tense body posture
        4 = lifts lip and/or growls
        5 = snaps and/or bites

    3. Rate the dog's frequency of possessiveness of the item (1 – 5). If you rated the dog above '1' on the previous question, rate HOW OFTEN the dog was possessive. If you selected '1' on the previous item, you should pick '1' here too.

        1 = never possessive (0% of time)
        2 = possessive 1-25% of time
        3 = possessive 26-50% of time
        4 = possessive 51-75% of time
        5 = possessive 76 – 100% of time

    4. Rate the dog's progress, compared to previous sessions.

        1 = dog is significantly BETTER (less possessive) than during previous session
        2 = dog is slightly BETTER than during previous session
        3 = dog is the SAME as previous session
        4 = dog is slightly WORSE (more possessive) than during previous session
        5 = dog is significantly WORSE than during previous session