

**In-House Behavior Modification Protocol**  
**Food Bowl Guarding**

*Protocol to be used for shelter dogs that exhibit low-medium level food bowl guarding behavior  
(stiffening, whale eye, growling, air snapping when approached)*

Repeat each step until the dog is comfortable and exhibits no signs of guarding before moving to the next step. If, at a given step, the dog demonstrates any guarding behavior go back to the previous step and proceed more slowly.

**Step 1** Hand feed the dog his entire meal (hand full's at a time) for 3 days. Ask him to sit and then offer the handful of food. This step teaches the dog that his food comes from a human and that the human controls the resource.

**The dog should be tethered during the following steps for safety**

**Step 2** Hold the dog's empty bowl and feed the meal in handful installments by reaching to get the food out of another bowl on the counter with your other hand. Ask the dog to sit and wait for him/her to look at you, then add the handful of food and offer the bowl (still in your hand). Repeat until all the food is gone. Do this step for several meals.

**Step 3** Put the empty bowl down on the floor in front of the dog and then, one handful at a time, feed the entire meal. Ask the dog to sit and wait for him/her to look at you before giving each handful. Do this step for several meals.

**Step 4** Put an empty bowl down in front of the dog and walk away. Walk back, ask the dog to sit and put a handful of food in the bowl and retreat. Repeat until the whole meal has been fed. Do this step for several meals.

**Step 5** Approach the dog while he/she is eating but stop far enough away that you do not trigger any negative response and toss a high value treat into the dish and then retreat. Repeat this until the dog has completed the bowl of food. Over the course of several sessions, gradually close the distance between yourself and the bowl before you toss the treat. Do this step until you can walk within one feet of the dog while he/she is eating, and he/she looks up at you anticipating the treat when you come close.

Each new person should start at step 1. If you have multiple people working on the protocol this means you may have one person on step 3 and another on step 1.

**To expedite the program, you can start with Step 5 and repeat this step with multiple people so that the dog is comfortable with someone walking near him/her while eating. The complete program is more beneficial.**