



CONTROL FEEDING

What You Need To Know

“But he never finishes all of his food, so I just leave it out so he can eat whenever he wants.”

There are many reasons why I don't agree with free-feeding:

- 1. If my dog ever has a health problem, I cannot accurately say what kind of eating history he has had recently.**
- 2. If you have more than one dog (or even cats, for that matter – I have seen cats eat dog food) you cannot regulate who is eating what.**
- 3. For puppies, good potty training cannot happen with a pup who eats whatever/whenever s/he wants.**
- 4. Dogs who have free feed never realize where their food comes from.**

Resource Control

Part of good leadership and respect habits branch from the control of resources: food, water, rest areas, and access to outside. A good leader provides an adequate amount of each; not too much, and definitely not too little. Leaders in the canine pack let the others know when they can eat, drink and sleep. We, as human leaders of dogs, don't need to be so strict, but letting dogs know where the food comes from does help with leadership symbolism. As you will discover a lot of what dogs know and understand is through many symbolic actions.

By starting to feed a puppy 3 times daily for a specific time period (usually 20 minutes or so) and then removing the food, we are setting a pattern for both:

You need to eat when it is offered to you and You cannot have any more until next time.

Soon, the puppy will understand the concept of mealtimes and look to you at feeding time.

Dogs Don't Need A Set Mealtime

Contrary to what you may think, dogs do NOT need a set mealtime. This may actually be a blessing to those busy owners with erratic schedules. Dogs do appreciate routine, so feeding within a certain block of time is best (in other words, although you don't need to feed your dog precisely at 5pm, s/he should be fed somewhere between 4 and 8pm). NOT feeding at a specific time will benefit owners of “pushy” dogs – those who insist by pacing, getting underfoot, nudging, or perhaps barking to you that “It is time to EAT! FEED ME NOW!”. You, as the benevolent leader, stop the pushy pattern of pacing, etc. by telling Spot to go to his place and “chill out” (all dogs should have a place they can go). You can offer Spot a chew, or better yet, teach him to find it for himself – “Where's your bone?! Go find your bone!”

Many trainers feel owners should eat FIRST (remember, leaders get to do everything first) before the dog(s) are fed. This is a good time to work with “no begging”. Dogs are opportunists, and pushy dogs will insist you feed them from the table.

“Spot, NO – go lie down!” – or crate him during your meal.

Since you, as leader, now control the food resource, you also control the food bowl itself. The food bowl is on loan to your dog. This means you can set down or pick up the bowl whenever you want – without a quarrel from your dog.