



HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY

Behavior Modification Handout

Coprophagia

The specific reason for stool eating in dogs is often debated and very little is known as to why dogs engage in this undesired behavior. There are numerous speculative ideas such as something lacking in the diet, attention seeking behavior, a hold over from nest or den cleaning behaviors from the dam. One thing we can all agree on is owners don't like it and controlling the behavior early on will help to eliminate a bad habit from taking hold.

Starting Off on the Right Paw / Managing Your Environment

Controlling or managing your environment is often a less stressful and faster way to solve some behavior problems. If you don't want your dog to do something then eliminate the opportunity for the behavior to happen or decrease the likelihood of the behavior with a series of precautions and preventatives.

- Keep your yard or kennel area clean from feces. When the dog eliminates pick it up right away.
- Supervise your dog when he is eliminating outside, interrupt any stool eating and redirect him with a food treat or toy. Clean up any feces right away.
- Use a food additive such as CoproBan or Fore-Bid available from your veterinarian to give the stool an unappealing flavor (to your dog). MSG can also be used on food for the same effect.
- If your dog is a cat box feeder use baby gates to eliminate his access. Covered boxes may also work for large dogs. Remember, make it easy for your cat to get to the box but not your dog.
- You may also use food additives on your cat's food to give the stool an unappealing taste (to your dog).
- Keep the box clean, scoop everyday. Your cat will enjoy a clean box and your dog will not have the opportunity to visit the buffet.

Avoiding the Pitfalls

- Punishment for this behavior is not going to be an effective deterrent and may only serve to create a fearful or aggressive response from your pet.
- Any aversive or booby trap you may use to scare your dog away from the litter box may also scare your cat!
- Be patient. This behavior is often exhibited in puppies and younger dogs. If given guidance by providing behavior modification and managing your environment most dogs will extinguish this behavior as they mature.
- This behavior should be addressed as soon as it appears. Coprophagia can be a health risk to your pet if he ingests other dog's feces. The possibility of contracting disease or parasites is likely.
- Always consult your veterinarian with behavioral changes in your pet to rule out any medical problems and get their advice on using medications or food additives.