behavior modification **Protocols**One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



food guarding program

The goal is to have the dog learn to be relaxed around the food bowl, lifting his head and even backing up from the bowl when you approach.

identifying dogs for the program:

- Dog is SAFER™ "1" or "2" on all parts of the SAFER™ assessment other than the food behavior.
- The dog does not shoulder rub or body slam during any part of the assessment.
- 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.

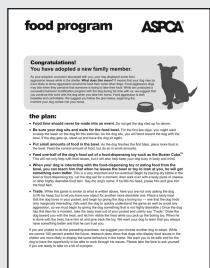
before you begin:

- 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, refill his bowl and present it to him again. During your first session you may need to fill the bowl a few times before you are able to capture a relaxation in body.
- 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.

