Coprophagia in dogs
(Eating poo)

Well Heeled Dog Club
www.thedogclub.co.uk

Why does my dog eat its own poo?



This habit (called coprophagia) is exhibited by many dogs and is more common than you may think. There are numerous theories as to why dogs do this, though none is conclusive.

Some experts think dogs may eat faeces to top up their vitamin intake. Others have suggested that it's an expression of fear or anxiety, or that it's an attempt to cover up their mistakes for fear of punishment. Some young dogs may learn this behaviour from watching their mothers - bitches eat the faeces of their pups to keep the den area clean.

The most common reason why dogs eat poo

In my experience the most common reason is simply down to diet. A dog can only absorb what his body needs; if his food is too rich in protein then his body cannot absorb it all and, if he can't work it off, he'll eliminate it. Dogs are scavengers by nature and wasting food is not an option - if he thinks there's value left in what he's deposited then he won't walk away from it, it'll be recycled!

So, before you start thinking of all sorts of complicated medical reasons, check what he's eating...

If he's on a dried complete food that's suitable for his age and level of daily exercise then he doesn't need wet food added to it; neither does he need scrambled eggs, raw meat, dried pig's ears, rawhide chews etc. By all means give your dog an occasional food treat but not every day. Dogs who also finish off a cat's meal should also be kept away from cat food - i know they love it but it's far too rich for them and their body can't absorb it - it will always pass through...

Medical causes for pets eating canine faeces

Dog coprophagia may also be a symptom of a medical problem and if you've ruled out the most common reasons metioned previously then a trip to the vets is advisable. Tell the vet about his behaviour, dietary habits and any other medical symptoms. Medical causes may include:

Internal parasites / Intestinal infections / Hyperthyroidism / Pancreatitis / Food allergies / Diabetes

If a medical problem is causing the behavior then a powder supplement can be prescribed to reduce the problem.

If obsessive compulsiveness is causing the dog to eat his own poop then a method must be found to relieve the anxiety and obsessive behaviour. There are a number of options available but it is important to try to understand the reason why the dog is doing this in the first place. If you'd like to discuss it, then give me a call.

Coprophagia (Eating poo)

Preventing Dog Coprophagia

One of the simplest ways to stop a dog from eating his own poop is to keep his toilet area clean by picking up after your dog and other pets every day. If your dog ingests his faeces before it is possible to clean it up then a muzzle can stop him from eating while doing his business. It may also be worth putting a deterrent in your dog's food or putting something on the faeces. Eg:

- **The Pineapple Method:** Put small chunks of fresh pineapple in your dog's food, this gives faeces a bitter taste (note - large pieces will induce vomiting).
- **The Courgette Method:** Cook some courgettes until soft in a little olive oil. A batch can be made and stored in the fridge. With each meal, give 1-2tsp to small dogs and up to 1 tablespoon for large dogs.
- **Bait faecal material** with a foul-tasting substance such as Tabasco sauce. But be prepared - your dog may develop a liking for it!
- **Training:** A well-trained dog should also respond to a command like 'Leave it' . Increasing your supervision, interaction and play time with the dog can also prevent dog coprophagia.



For a long-standing problem you will need to be extremely vigilant and your vet may suggest that you seek the the help of an dog behaviourist. If so, give me a call.

If you would like any further help or information, please contact Mike Flannery:
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