

Teach Enthusiastic Eaters Self Control

Your dog may be eating a great deal but still may not be getting the nutrition his body demands.

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Q: I have a 5-month-old Doberman Pinscher, and every time he smells food or thinks he's fixing to eat he goes crazy. He does all kinds of turns and twists, and then when he sits to accept the food (I have managed that command) he gobbles it down. I don't know what to do. I need to get him under my control or he will think he is the dominant one. Any helpful ideas would be greatly appreciated.

A: First, is he hungry? He's growing fast and requires a good amount of high-quality food each day. Be sure to feed a name-brand, premium food. This may not have anything to do with "dominance." If the food is not a high-quality diet, your dog may be eating a great deal of it but still not be intaking the nutrition his body demands. How often are you feeding him? He needs at least two meals a day, and with his enthusiasm maybe three. Is he ribby? If the food is of good quality and he's still extremely hungry, ask your vet to check him for worms. Even if your dog was wormed as a younger puppy, he may need to be treated again. Wormy pups can appear to have big bellies (bellies filled with worms, not food) and can eat a great deal but still be starving. While you prepare his food, take a bit of it, show it to him, make him sit, then reward him. Do this several times at every meal and soon he'll be sitting instead of spinning. If your Dobe is happy and healthy but just an enthusiastic eater, try this game: Fill his bowl and instruct him to sit. Lower the bowl a tiny bit. If he dives for it, stand up and lift the bowl. Wait a few seconds and repeat this action. This may take a minute or so the first time, but he'll quickly learn that sitting makes the food appear and diving for it makes it disappear. I bet in just a few days you'll be able to lower it all the way to the ground while your pup sits quietly nearby.