

## Curbing Excessive Drooling

*By September Morn*

**Q.** I have a 7-year-old neutered male "mostly" Labrador Retriever. We adopted him from the humane shelter when he was 4 1/2 months old. He is very well behaved, obedient, and well mannered except for one thing. When the family eats, he lies on the floor watching us eat and drools all over the floor. When I'm cooking, he lies on the floor, watching me cook and drools all over the floor. He leaves puddles. It's really disgusting. He's been doing this for years.

He knows we do not share while we are eating, but after we have finished our meal, we let him have a few (very few as we want to keep his weight down) scraps of meat or fat and/or veggies that we know he will eat. Is there anything I can do to stop this behavior at this point in his life, or should I just put him in another part of the house while we're eating/cooking? We just can't take the drooling anymore. It's really disgusting. I know the behavior is our fault, but how can we stop it?

**A.** Drooling is an involuntary behavior triggered by the sight, scent and even the thought of food, so teaching your dog to stop drooling is not a realistic goal. Even if you were to put him in a different part of the house while you cook and eat, he'll still know what you're doing and there's a strong likelihood the smell and thought of that food will trigger his drooling response. So you'd still have to clean up drool, just in a different part of the house.

However, there are a couple of things you could do to manage the drooling and keep it from leaving a puddle on your floor. Put down a large towel for your dog to lie on while you cook and eat and teach him to settle on that towel. The towel will catch and absorb the drool and you can toss it into the washer afterwards instead of mopping saliva off your floor. If you give him a food-stuffed puzzle toy to chew on while you cook and eat, that will reward him for staying on his towel spot. With the food puzzle to occupy his mind and mouth, he won't be coveting your food so intently, and as he licks and chews the toy he'll swallow most of his saliva.