

Dogs Fighting for Food

Puppy won't leave older dog's dinner alone.

By September Morn

Q. I have an 8-year-old Vizsla and a 10-week-old Vizsla puppy. The puppy won't leave the older dog's food alone. The older one is very docile, eats slowly, and just leaves her bowl when the puppy nudges her away. Right now I'm keeping the puppy away physically and have attempted treats and sit-stays, but I would like to not have to stand guard while the older dog eats. How can I get the puppy to stay away from the older dog's food?

A. Feed your puppy in his crate, an indoor pen, or a baby-gated room. This will: Eliminate the problem by preventing its occurrence. Keep your pup from practicing overly bossy behavior and developing it as a permanent habit. Allow your older dog to relax and eat calmly and leisurely. Release you from having to referee meals. Form a positive association for your pup about confinement.

It's not cruel to confine a puppy to his own private eating area while he learns good manners around food. In fact, all puppies should learn calm, non-competitive eating habits. Managing the eating environment in a multi-dog household is important, so each dog feels safe at mealtimes and bossier dogs can't bully others away from their bowls. Good management at mealtime helps teach puppies to be more relaxed and less competitive around food, which makes them safer and more pleasant to live with.