



## UNLEASH YOUR DOG'S INNER LEGEND



## Make a Meal of It: What Your Dog's Eating Habits Reveal

Decoding your dog's dining habits can reveal valuable information about their mental and physical health. Dental problems, tummy upset, or anxiety can all cause a dog to skip meals or be picky. On the flip side, a dog that hoards food or growls during meals might be showing resource guarding — a behavioural issue to address with positive training.

In this article we get into the guts of mealtime behaviours.

### What Kind of Eater is Your Dog?

#### 1. The Vacuum Cleaner (Speed Eater)

If your dog inhales food faster than you can blink, it's more than messy—it can be dangerous. Gulping increases the risk of choking and life-threatening bloat (GDV). Use slow-feeder bowls or scatter kibble on a snuffle mat to slow things down. DIY Bonus tip: A muffin tin with tennis balls over the food turns dinner into a fun puzzle!

#### 2. The Rescue Pig (Overeater)

Always hungry? Always begging? Overeating leads to obesity, joint strain, and heart trouble. Ditch free-feeding and measure meals carefully. Try puzzle feeders to add mental stimulation and slow down food intake. Alternate protein treats with sliced carrots or apple.

**3. The Gourmet Growler (Aggressive Eater)**  
Growling over food is a red flag. Food guarding often stems from past scarcity or anxiety. Never punish—instead, feed separately and reward calm behaviour near the bowl. For serious cases, consult a professional behaviourist.

**4. The Anything-Eater (Non-Foods Eater / Pica)**  
Grass, rocks, underwear... some dogs eat it all. Pica is an eating disorder with both physical and psychological causes. And it is potentially deadly! It could signal boredom, anxiety, or nutrient deficiencies. Rule out medical causes, then focus on enrichment: puzzle toys, chew treats, and interactive play keep mouths occupied with safe things. Remove temptations and train "leave it".

**5. The Grazing Houdini (Shy or Anxious Eater)**  
Eats only when no one's watching? This could be a stress signal indicating fear or illness, and it might lead to malnutrition. Sensitive dogs need quiet, predictable mealtimes in peaceful corners. Be patient. With time, consistency, and kindness, even the shyest pups can grow confident at the bowl.

**6. The Finicky Feeder Today's kibble?**  
Boring. Yesterday's kibble? Also, boring. Finicky eaters sniff, sigh, and walk away, unless it's been "upgraded." Often caused by too many treats or table scraps, picky eating can lead to poor nutrition. Stick to set feeding times, avoid constant menu changes, and use occasional healthy toppers like bone broth or plain cooked chicken. Pretending to eat your dog's dry food by tossing it down your shirt can work wonders.

**7. The Nonchalant Nibbler (Slow Eater)**  
These dogs take their time, grazing like they're on a vineyard holiday. While slow eating isn't usually a problem, keep an eye out for underlying causes like dental pain or stress.

Encourage appetite with calm environments or tasty puzzle toys that make eating more engaging.

#### 8. The Floor Forager

Some dogs instinctively mimic their wolf ancestry and prefer eating off the floor. Others might be irritated by reflections on a metal bowl, or they have trouble navigating the sides. Try different bowls, and washable feeding mats to keep things hygienic.

#### 9. The Sneaky Snacker

These opportunists swipe snacks off counter-tops, scavenge from bins, and vanish with your boerie roll when you blink. The fix? Keep food out of reach, train a solid "leave it," and offer stuffed feeding toys or chews during human mealtimes.

#### 10. The Bowl Jockey

Is your dog riding their bowl from kitchen to couch? There might be some flavour stuck to the side that they're trying to liberate with lick. Try a heavy bowl with a non-slip base.

When the next mealtime comes, keep an eye on your dog's eating personality. Food can strengthen your bond and help your dog live a healthier life.

