

Why dogs eat poo

Watching your dog eat poo is unpleasant, and it can leave you wondering whether something is missing from their diet. The behaviour is called coprophagia. It has several possible explanations, so a deficiency should not be assumed from the behaviour alone.

Start with practical management and a conversation with your vet, particularly if this is a new habit or your dog has other changes in appetite, weight or digestion.

Why might a dog eat poo?

Some dogs investigate or develop a habit of eating faeces when it is available. Medical and dietary factors can also contribute, including problems affecting digestion or appetite. Your vet can assess the diet, symptoms and any testing needed before the behaviour is treated as purely a training issue.

Keep a simple record: whose poo they are eating, when it happens, what they are fed and whether anything else has changed. Tell your vet about medicines and supplements too. Do not stop prescribed medication yourself.

Reduce the opportunities

Pick up faeces promptly and supervise toilet trips while you work on the habit. Once your dog finishes toileting, calmly call them away and reward them at a separate spot while someone cleans up. Where possible, arrange the area so they cannot turn straight back to the faeces.

Use suitable barriers to keep dogs out of litter trays while allowing cats comfortable access. On walks, scan ahead and create distance from faeces before your dog reaches it. Avoid turning every discovery into a chase or confrontation.

Practise useful skills away from the problem

Teach a recall and a “leave it” cue using easier, safe items first. Reward your dog for turning towards you and moving away. Build difficulty gradually instead of expecting a new cue to work when they are already eating something.

Our [Leave It guide](#) explains the distinction between leaving an item alone and dropping something already in the mouth. Training supports supervision; it does not replace it.

Do not rely on home additives

Meat tenderiser, pumpkin and other kitchen additions should not be presented as automatically safe or reliable treatments for poo eating. Products differ, and an addition may be unsuitable for your dog's health or diet. Ask your vet before adding supplements, enzymes or stool-deterrent products.

A complete, suitable diet matters, but simply buying a more expensive food will not necessarily resolve this habit. The right response depends on the individual dog and any health findings.

Avoid punishment

Do not scold your dog or rub their nose in an accident. Keep the area clean, make successful choices easy and reward those choices. Offer appropriate activities and rest rather than trying to exhaust the behaviour away.

Faeces can expose dogs to parasites and other infection risks. Ask your vet about appropriate parasite prevention and wash your hands after cleaning up. Contact the vet if your dog is unwell, has persistent diarrhoea or vomiting, is losing weight or develops unusual thirst or appetite.

Further reading

[VCA Animal Hospitals: coprophagia in dogs.](#)