

# Weird Things That Dogs Do – And Why They Do Them

Chances are your dog does one or more of these quirky things and in turn, you've wondered, 'Why on earth is he doing this?' There's a good reason behind each of these strange canine habits, and two of them likely includes a message intended specially for you.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you've ever wondered about some of your dog's quirky habits, here we explain 4 of the most common, and offer suggestions for curbing bothersome behaviors
- Some dogs take their food out of the bowl and drop it on the floor before eating it. This could be a food-preference issue, or it could mirror wild canine behavior
- Dogs who are chronic grass eaters may need a more biologically appropriate diet and perhaps a visit to the veterinarian to rule out an underlying health problem
- If your dog kicks up grass after he poops, it's not as silly as it looks. He's covering his mess, and he's also marking his territory by scraping the ground with his paws
- There may be nutritional and/or behavioral reasons behind the gross habit of poop-eating that many dogs engage in

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Many dog parents spend a fair amount of time watching their furry companions and thinking, "Why does he DO that?" And some of the more curious canine behaviors we witness can even be cause for concern.

Before you run off to the doggy psychologist or scour the Internet looking for answers to "Why does my dog ... [fill in the blank]," here are four of the most common curious canine behaviors explained.

## Why Does My Dog Move Food From His Bowl to the Floor Before Eating It?

This can be a rather crazy-making behavior if you enjoy a clean floor, and is especially icky if you're also a raw feeder with wall-to-wall carpeting! Unfortunately, it can be difficult to nail down exactly why your dog performs this odd "I prefer to dine away from my bowl" behavior.

For example, I've known dogs who moved kibble from the bowl to the floor before eating it, but the problem disappeared once they were switched to a more species-appropriate diet. Many dogs find real food so delicious they don't want to waste time playing with their dinner — they want to dive right in.

Some experts believe the behavior is a feature of pack mentality. According to Dr. Julie Albright-Keck, an assistant of Veterinary Behavior at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, when wild dogs make a kill, the less dominant members of the pack drag pieces of food off and eat privately to avoid being challenged by a higher ranking canine.<sup>1</sup>

And while your own dog may have zero competition for his food in your household, he may still feel an instinctive urge to protect his chow. It's also possible the noise of food against a metal bowl, or the clanging of his tags against the bowl disturbs him, and he prefers to eat without distractions.

To attempt to curb this behavior, if you're feeding your dog kibble, I recommend transitioning him to a more biologically appropriate diet to see if that does the trick. It will definitely improve your dog's overall health, if not his table manners. You might also want to try switching to a nontoxic ceramic food bowl or a regular dinner plate if you suspect your dog is sensitive to the noise created by eating from a metal bowl.

If after changing to a better diet and different dinnerware he's still moving food to the floor, see if moving his feeding spot to a more secluded area curbs the behavior. And certainly if you have other dogs in the family, everyone should be separated for meals so there's no competition for food and you can monitor who is eating what, and how much.

## **Speaking of Strange Eating Habits — Why Does My Dog Eat Grass?**

If your otherwise healthy, well-nourished dog nibbles on selected grass once in a while, there's no cause for concern. Unless, of course, the grass has been treated with chemicals (pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers, etc.). You definitely don't want your precious pooch ingesting toxins with her grass snack.

Dogs that selectively choose specific grasses to nibble on may be seeking out the plant's medicinal qualities (many grasses are high in potassium and enzymes) or looking for a natural source of fiber. But then there are the frantic, non-selective grass eaters, which may mean a GI problem is brewing.

Dogs will instinctively search for natural remedies for the occasional upset stomach, and grass often does the trick, not to mention it's usually easy to find. There is something about the texture of grass that triggers vomiting or a bowel movement in many dogs, which relieves tummy discomfort. But if the grass eating is chronic and especially if it causes your pet to vomit frequently, it's time to make an appointment with your veterinarian.

In the meantime, I recommend upgrading your dog's diet if she's still eating kibble or any non-human grade commercial dog food. Most healthy dogs fed a balanced, species-appropriate diet don't eat grass because they receive all the nourishment their bodies need from their food, and they rarely suffer from digestive issues. Adding probiotics and digestive enzymes can also benefit dogs with "sensitive stomachs."

If you're sure your dog is receiving optimal nutrition from a species-appropriate diet but she still eats a notable amount of grass, consider growing your own sunflower sprouts. Sprouts can provide an easy, inexpensive source of fresh, live, organic vegetation and are much more nutritious for your pet than grass.

## **Speaking of Grass — Why Does My Dog Kick It After Pooping?**

Has this ever happened to you? You're walking little Buddy on his leash and like the well-trained boy he is, when you give him a verbal cue to poop, he produces almost immediately. Voila!

You're standing ready with biodegradable poop bag in hand, and as you bend over to collect his deposit, grass and soil pelts your face because Buddy, having done his business, is kicking up his heels in celebration. What the heck?

Here's the simple explanation for Buddy's post-poop happy dance: Wild canines kick the ground after pooping to tidy up (much as cats do in their litter box), and also to mark territory. Your dog has glands in his feet that secrete pheromones, and a couple of backward scrapes of the paws release those chemicals, thus "claiming" the spot.

That's why dogs spend so much time sniffing the ground, bushes, tree trunks, and anywhere another animal may have eliminated. Little Buddy is constantly monitoring his territory and sniffing out information about other dogs who have come and gone.

## And Speaking of Poop — Why Does My Dog Sometimes Eat It?

This quirky canine habit ranks up there as one of, if not THE most disgusting behaviors for most dog guardians. The scientific name for stool eating, by the way, is coprophagia. Does a fancy name make it any less revolting? I didn't think so.

Dogs eat poop for lots of reasons. Sometimes, there's an underlying medical problem like an enzyme deficiency or pancreatic insufficiency. Intestinal malabsorption and GI parasites are also common medical reasons underlying coprophagia.

Dogs on poor-quality, processed dry food diets will often seek out other sources of digestive enzymes to make up for a chronic enzyme deficiency brought on by a biologically inappropriate diet.

Coprophagia can also have a behavioral cause. Dogs that are feeling anxious or stressed may eat poop. So may dogs who have been punished for inappropriate elimination, and sadly, many puppy mill dogs are at high risk for habitual stool eating.

My recommendations for curbing/eliminating this behavior include feeding a diet containing human-grade (preferably unprocessed) protein and supplement with **probiotics** and digestive enzymes, and insuring your dog has toys that stimulate her brain and alleviate boredom. Also ensure she is well-exercised.

Consider experimenting with some of the over-the-counter coprophagia deterrent products. Make sure you look for a nontoxic product that doesn't contain MSG.

If despite your best efforts your dog's poop eating behavior isn't improving, or is getting worse, I recommend making an appointment with your vet to rule out any underlying medical reason for the behavior.

## Sources and References

[VetStreet](#)

<sup>1</sup> [VetStreet, July 24, 2012](#)

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