

Coprophagia

Eating animal faeces or the stools of any other animal is known as coprophagia. This condition is instinctive and can be seen in wild dogs, wolves and the domestic dog whether it is in the home or kept in a kennel environment. This condition is also enabled by the rich food that puppies and adult dogs are fed, because the waste that is produced is relatively unchanged nutritionally therefore appealing to puppies and adult dogs no matter how disgusting it appears to us. Some dogs maybe sick a few hours after eating animal faeces and others seem to digest it as if it were their daily meal with little side effects. Other dogs may experience loose motions afterwards. There are products available from pet stores to assist with coprophagia, which are generally food additives that have the effect of making the faeces smell and taste repugnant. The problem is that no-body ever asked the dogs what the faeces tasted like afterwards and therefore for some dogs they work fine and for others it is as if you have just added a little more salt and pepper to taste.

Another commonly used deterrent is a garlic tablet added to the diet. These are available from pet stores and most health food shops and are an economical deterrent. Along with any product that is bought to help prevent coprophagia, it is better to teach your dog to relieve on command followed by a reward which will teach the puppy or dog to come to you after going to the toilet. Alternatively relieving him on a long extendable lead is a valuable tool, or a change to a different dog food to one of higher quality so there is less waste produced, (which should be changed gradually over a week). Experience suggests that there is an increased incidence on dogs fed tinned food or cereal based foods.

There are also many old wives tales about controlling coprophagia and these include adding a ring of pineapple to the dog's diet and also the use of cooked courgettes is often spoken about. These too supposedly have the effect of making the faeces taste repugnant. Lacing stools in the garden with Tabasco sauce or pepper is another old wives tale, but is recommended by many pet owners who have been successful with this method.

If your dog is a prolific offender a muzzle whilst free running will ensure they are safe.