

## **AFTER MEAL MADNESS**

It is very common that after a meal whether it is breakfast or in the later evening that you will see your dog suddenly charge off around the room at 100mph. This mad five minutes is sometimes known as 'after dinner madness'. And it is not just adults that are prone to after dinner madness, but puppies are can be prone to short outbursts of madness after eating their meals too. Running around without a care for anyone or anything in their path, they will charge around for a few minutes before settling down once again as if nothing had happened. Tucking their tails underneath them and with ears pinned back, the five-minute fling usually begins as soon as the last morsel of food has been polished off.

There are various reasons, which have been given for after meal madness but the most likely explanation being that it is a sign of enormous relief. You only have to see the pleasure on their faces and body language to see that they also receive reward from their behaviour. If something is found to be rewarding then it is likely to elicit repeat performance, again, again and again. The highlight of the day for many dogs is the excitement of mealtimes. Each moment of everyday is spent waiting to quash the feeling of hunger, after all dogs are fundamentally scavengers and predators with their bellies ruling their brains for the majority of the time. Then imagine the satisfying relief following the most enjoyable part of the day and you can understand why your dog will suddenly charge around in circles.

Although amusing this period can become a little uncontrollable if not managed correctly and can be a little more than dangerous with a dog that is larger than average. If after meal madness becomes a little more than you can bear then there are alternative means to controlling your dog's behaviour. Distraction is a successful method that is used very regularly by behaviourists. By producing the dog's favourite toy as soon after meal times will give the dog another source upon which to focus his attention. Alternatively you may want to make meal times last a little bit longer than is usual and make your dog work just a little bit harder at meal times. By placing a proportion of the dog's food inside toys such as Kong's or roll-a-treat balls, you are teaching your dog to work for their daily allowance of food and making the completion of their daily diet a relief in itself and therefore less likely to begin charging around the home. A further alternative would be to place your dog on a lead after the meal to break the habit so it doesn't become a repetitive behaviour, because the more practice the dog has to perform the behaviour the harder it would be to resolve at a later date.

A further very effective way of controlling this behaviour would be to split the dog's daily allowance of food into several small meals per day so there is no single highlight of the day but several high spots to each and every day.

