

Dishy Dogs

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Optimising Pet Health



POOP EATERS aka COPROPHAGIA

FACT SHEET

wellbeing, healing and disease prevention

Reading time: 6 minutes

Is your dog eating poop?



As gross as stool eating (aka coprophagia) is to humans, it's actually a common habit of many dogs. But the possible reasons for why dogs find their poop and/or the poop of others akin to a highly prized delicacy, vary from a wide spectrum of reasons,

from medical to behavioural in nature. While poop eating may be something as simple as boredom, it can actually also be something more complex like diabetes. So, as distasteful as the topic of poop may be to us humans, it's important to look at the possible causes.

There are several medical reasons why your dog might eat poop, so let's explore them:

Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI): Also known as pancreatic

insufficiency, this is a condition where your dog is creating little or no digestive enzymes in the pancreas. Without added enzymes, a dog will basically slowly starve, with symptoms including weight loss, diarrhoea, and yes, stool eating, because he's trying to get those much-needed nutrients.

Enzyme deficiency: In the wild, the canine diet works in harmony with its surroundings. When the canine eats prey, it eats whole prey, including the guts, which would naturally contain the appropriate amount of digestive enzymes dogs need. This isn't the case with the kibble-heavy, highly processed diet the modern urban dog subsists on.

Digestive enzymes are a key component of your dog's digestive process, and without them, they can't properly absorb their food. Basically, they will poop out nutrients undigested. Dogs do create enzymes in their body, but they are not enough to complete the digestive process effectively – so they need to get some of these enzymes from their food. If there is a deficiency, not only may they then develop ailments, but they may also start to crave that faeces they just rid themselves of – because, well, it's full of nutrients.

Parasites: Intestinal parasites that absorb the nutrients your dog should be getting from his food could be another reason your dog is craving stool.

Conditions causing increased appetite: Certain diseases like diabetes and thyroid issues, as well as steroids, can make dogs ravenous enough to eat stool (honestly many dogs don't need much of a push).

Other deficiencies: A hydrochloric acid deficiency that may happen with age or from a bad diet can also lead to poor digestion that can in turn lead to a search for nutrients in stool. Hydrochloric acid breaks down protein as part of the digestive process. Trace mineral deficiency can also lead to stool eating, as well as eating less digestible things like plastic.

Malabsorption: Any other condition that may lead to poor nutrient absorption can in turn lead to stool eating. Not only may your dog want to eat his stool, because of those tasty undigested nutrients, but he may find your cat's stool even more delightful. It's important to consider whose stool he is seeking, because it may also be an indicator of a deficiency or illness in that pet.

Underfeeding: Make sure you are feeding your dog enough food at regular times. If your dog is losing weight on a fresh, raw, whole diet, then feed him more! And keep to a schedule, a hungry dog will look for other food sources you may not like.

Here are some behavioural reasons why your dog might eat poop:

Cleanliness: There's one key time that a dog will eat stool and it's very much in the natural order of things. This is when a female dog cleans up after her

puppies to keep the nest clean. This drive for cleanliness could also account for other dogs that “clean up” stool.

Puppies: As puppies start to get curious about their surroundings, they may decide to take a nibble out of some faeces as part of the exploration process. Puppies usually grow out of this.

Scavengers: Dogs are natural scavengers that are attracted to scent. They are not repulsed by faeces as are us humans. And if the opportunity presents itself, they might just take it.

Boredom: If your dog is home alone all day with not much to do, and there happens to be some poop within his reach, he may just find a new way to entertain himself and get a little treat in the process.

Attention seeking: Our dogs love us and want our attention. If they're feeling a little ignored, even getting in trouble will please them, because, well, they have our attention. So, sneaking out into the yard and plopping down for a mid-afternoon faecal snack is a double whammy because he gets a treat AND our attention.

Stress: Dogs who are stressed (is he in a kennel all day?) may relieve stress by eating poop.

Puppy mills: According to Karen Becker, DVM, puppy mill dogs may be at risk to develop this behaviour because of the conditions they are raised in: lack of food and long-term crating, for instance.

Punishment: Also, according to Dr Becker, dogs who were punished for pooping in the house may start to think poop is bad and eat the evidence, so to speak.

Doggie see, doggie eat doo-doo: A younger dog can learn this behaviour from an older dog that has acquired a taste for dung. So, make sure and nip the problem in the bud!

If your adult dog starts to dine on dung, **you should consult with your vet to rule out health problems** like:

- Parasites
- Diets deficient in nutrients and calories
- Malabsorption syndromes
- Diabetes, Cushing's, thyroid disease, and other conditions that might cause an increase in appetite
- Drugs, such as steroids

How to stop your dog from eating poop - Veterinarians and dog owners have seen improvements with the following strategies:

- **Feed your pet a species appropriate diet:** Feeding your pet a high-quality raw food diet will assist in ensuring your pet gets the right food for digestion.
- **Vitamin supplementation:** There's been a long-standing theory that dogs eat faeces because they are missing something in their diets, so a high-quality/potency multivitamin such as Dishy Dogs Vitamin Pet will do the trick, as it has Vitamin B complex. Vitamin-B deficiency, in particular, has been a prime suspect, and studies have backed this up. In 1981, scientists showed faecal microbial activity synthesized thiamine, a B-vitamin. Other research found other missing nutrients.
- **Add digestive enzyme to your pet's diet:** Dogs do create enzymes in their body, but they are not enough to complete the digestive process effectively so, adding a high-quality digestive enzyme such as Dishy Dogs Digestit Pet to their meal will give them the appropriate enzymes they need.
- **If stress is the culprit,** then add a high-quality, natural calming formula such as Dishy Dogs Calm Pet and/or give your dog tasty raw bones such as beef brisket, beef or lamb necks or other types of bones as bones give dogs endorphins and reduces stress.
- **Taste-aversion products:** The theory is that certain tastes and smells are as disgusting to dogs as the idea of stool eating is to us, so adding a poop-eating deterrent to food or treats will make the poop that's being produced less appealing. Many of these products contain camomile, pepper-plant derivatives, yucca, garlic, and parsley. Just remember to treat all the dogs in a multi-dog household if there's a poop-eating problem!

Another way to stop the problem is through training and environmental management methods, including:

- **Keep the dog's living area clean,** including the yard, so there will be no poops for him to pick up.
- Cat owners should **keep** that litter box clean or out of the dog's reach.
- **Supervise your dog on walks,** and pick up after him immediately.
- Training - **Work hard on the commands "leave it" and "come."**
One simple exercise is to teach your dog to come to you for a food treat as soon as he has eliminated. That way, the dog will develop a habit to run to you for a tasty titbit, instead of reaching for the revolting one on the ground.

If you are interested in wellbeing, disease prevention and healing your pet, then ask us about Dishy Dogs range of superfood meals, supplements, bone broth and treats or go to our website <https://dishydogs.com.au>

Dishy Dogs is certified "Australian Made and Owned". Our ingredients are 100% human grade, 100% preservative and additive **free** with **no** added salt, sugar, flavour or colour.

