

## **BEGGING: HOW TO STOP BEGGING AT THE TABLE**

**The fundamental principle is to extinguish the begging behavior by removing all rewards:**

- The pet should not receive any food or attention for begging.
- If there is any chance that food will inadvertently fall off the table, put the pet in another location when people eat.

**Expected pitfalls include:**

- The begging behavior is likely to escalate before it diminishes.
- The pet may try different behavioral patterns for begging; however, if they are not rewarded, they too will decrease.
- This can be a difficult treatment plan to maintain; frustration, guilt, escalated pet effort, and inadvertent reward (food falling off table) all contribute to failure.

**Additional steps that may help with success include:**

- **Exercise** the pet prior to periods where begging is anticipated; a tired pet is less likely to beg.
- Feed the pet before humans eat; a satiated pet may beg less.
- Feed the pet two to three smaller meals as opposed to one big meal in a 24-hour period.
- Segregate the pet in another location before eating.
- Anticipate situations that may elicit begging and distract the pet with a different activity.
  - \_ Provide the pet with a long-lasting food treat; food puzzle toys filled with pet food or treats can be a distraction.
  - \_ Teach the pet to go to a location on command, such as a bed or a crate; send there when begging is likely.
- Interactive punishments (yelling, hitting, etc.) are not recommended since they are often ineffective (pet perception is that it gained attention) or they may create anxiety/aggression problems in the pet.