

Stop the poo chew!



Coprophagia is the consumption of faeces by an animal. Dogs may eat their own faeces, the faeces of another dog or the faeces of another species.

Whilst your dog's idea of a palate cleanser may not be something many of us would wish to discuss at the dinner table, it is important to remember that you are not alone! With 23% of dogs occasionally eating faeces, and 16% being regular offenders¹, coprophagia is a common problem.

The good news? There is something you can do about it!

CONTROLLING COPROPHAGIA (POO EATING) IN DOGS

1 IDENTIFYING THE CAUSE

The causes of coprophagia can be considered in three categories:

1. Normal behaviour
2. Abnormal behaviour
3. Symptom of an underlying medical condition

Seeking veterinary advice is a really important step, to establish whether the behaviour is normal (such as for nursing bitches or very young puppies) or secondary to a medical condition. If these have been excluded then it is likely the coprophagia is a behavioural problem.

2 ADDRESSING THE UNDERLYING BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEM

Coprophagia can be a response to chronic stress in dogs, caused by problems such as; separation anxiety, boredom or where punishment techniques have been used during toilet training.

Speak to your vet who will be able to help you address specific behavioural problems. In some cases, referral to a behavioural specialist may be required to resolve the problem.

3 OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Breaking any habit is not easy, particularly if there are constant reminders in front of you! Make it easier for your dog to break the pattern of behaviour by minimising their exposure to faeces. This includes;

- Keeping your garden or yard free of faeces at all times. Place your dog calmly inside the house before you embark on poo removal, as rushing to clean it away can seem like a 'game' to coprophagic dogs, encouraging them to ingest it
- Keeping dogs on short leads on walks
- Ensure all pets in the household are **toilet trained** (see additional advice sheet)
- Keeping cat litter trays out of reach



4 BEHAVIOURAL TRAINING

As the presence of faeces cannot be avoided indefinitely, it is important to work on behavioural training, which involves teaching redirection and response substitution to your dog.

- **Redirection** involves averting your dog's attention away from faeces, such as with a **recall** or **'leave it'** cue (see additional sheets).
- **Response substitution** involves training your dog to display an alternative behaviour upon discovering faecal matter (such as coming straight back into the house, or returning to your heel) and builds upon redirection training.

Like with any behavioural training, this will require the 3 P's; **praise, patience and practice!**

It is very important not to punish your dog if you do spot them eating faeces. The increased attention (of punishment) may be seen as a reward or 'game' to them, inadvertently reinforcing coprophagia through attention seeking behaviours. Secondly, it may encourage your pet to consume faeces more rapidly in future in an attempt to 'hide the evidence'. The best thing you can do is to remain calm, not make a fuss and continue working on redirection and response substitution.

COPRO•NIL BREAKING THE DIRTY HABIT

COPRO•NIL is a **faecal taste-modifier and behavioural aid** to help with the correction of undesirable coprophagic behaviour.

COPRO•NIL also provides a **comprehensive B vitamin source** as deficiencies in B vitamins may contribute to coprophagia.²

COPRO•NIL makes the your pet's faeces taste horrible, giving you the opportunity to break the habit and modify behaviour.

HOW TO USE COPRO•NIL:

- 1 level teaspoon (5g) per 10kg daily divided between meals
- Feed with every meal to ensure each stool contains COPRO•NIL
- Use for 10-14 days initially, and up to 6 weeks if required
- Always use alongside behavioural modification strategies
- In the event that your dog is ingesting the faeces from other pets in the household, COPRO•NIL must be fed to all pets in the household at each meal

5 MAKE FAECES TASTE UNAPPEALING

There are methods you can employ to ensure faeces become unappealing to your coprophagic dog, helping them to break the habit as you embark on a training programme.



COPRO•NIL IS PRESENTED AS A POWDER AND CAN BE SPRINKLED ONTO WET OR DRY FOOD.



Administer 0.5g/kg per day total

Weight	Total daily amount	Twice daily	Three times daily
5-10kg	1/2 tsp	1/4 tsp	1/6 tsp
10-20kg	1 tsp	1/2 tsp	1/2 tsp
20-30kg	2 tsp	1 tsp	2/3 tsp

COPRO•NIL is intended for use in dogs and cats only. It is recommended to speak to your vet before using this product in any of your pets.

Be sure you are not over feeding your dog because undigested food in the faeces can encourage coprophagia – speak to your vet or vet nurse for guidance on correct feeding. Limit the amount of treats you give your dog between meals – the use of small training treats (such as dried liver treats with 1/4 teaspoon of COPRO•NIL added to the pot) is allowed for training purposes.

PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE ARE KEY TO CONTROLLING COPROPHAGIC BEHAVIOUR.

References:

1. Hart, B. L., Hart, L. A., Thigpen, A. P., Tran, A., & Bain, M. J. (2018). The paradox of canine conspecific coprophagy. *Veterinary medicine and science*, 4(2), 106-114.
2. Reed, D.H., Harrington, D.D. (1981). Experimentally Induced Thiamine Deficiency in Beagle Dogs: Clinical Observations, *Am. J. Vet Res*, Vol. 42 No 6, pp 984-991

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