

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Why does my dog eat poop?

We've all seen them do it. Your dog is sniffing around in the back yard or out for a walk in the park, when suddenly, you see him munching on something. A closer look reveals that he's eating... poop! (Feel free to gasp or gag here). What would possess a dog to eat poop--his own, another dog's, or that of another animal like a rabbit? Is she not getting the right nutrients? Is she a neat freak trying to clean up the yard? Why does your pet partake in this disgusting habit? Chances are, it is just that--a bad habit,--albeit one that we humans find quite revolting. Incidentally, the fancy term for "poop eating" is coprophagia.

Most dogs who eat poop are not lacking proper nutrition, although sometimes, there is an underlying medical problem such as anemia, malabsorption, or a compulsive disorder. They may be bored, may be trying to cover it up, or may be hungry. Coprophagia is also very common in puppies, many of whom will grow out of the behavior. Most likely they are just exploring their environment. The truth is most dogs are just not that discerning when it comes to what they eat or put in their mouths. If they were, we would have fewer cases of dogs swallowing rocks, socks, toys or other non-food items. The bottom line is that we really don't know why dogs eat their own stools.

So, what can you do to control your dog's "potty mouth"? Number one, keep the yard cleaned up. Second, make sure your pet is eating a good quality, highly digestible diet. Finally, there are commercial products that can be used to change the taste of the stool to make it less desirable to your dog or, try a remote punishment like a loud air horn or remote controlled citronella collar that you can trigger from afar when you see your dog getting ready to snatch up that tasty brown morsel. Until the behavior is controlled, you may want to refrain from smooching your pooch!

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