

Coprophagia

BEHAVIOR SERIES



Coprophagia, the ingestion of feces, is a form of pica (an improper ingestion of non-food items). Coprophagia can be seen at any age. Some dogs will only eat the feces of certain species (*e.g.*, cat feces) while other dogs consume feces from a variety of species, including their own feces. Puppies may engage in coprophagia as a part of normal exploration and some will outgrow the behavior without specific intervention.

If no medical or nutritional problems are discovered, the coprophagia may be behavioral in nature. Although it is a difficult concept for humans to comprehend, the dog may actually enjoy the taste of feces. For these dogs, the behavior is self-rewarding and therefore may become a habit that is difficult to eradicate. Other less common causes of coprophagia include a very deprived environment or a compulsive behavior.

Things to do:

- See your Banfield doctor
- Limit access to feces. This is usually the most successful intervention and may include strategies such as:
 - Block access to the cat's litter box
 - Pick up feces immediately from yard
 - Keep your dog on leash in areas where feces are likely (*e.g.*, parks, farms)
- For dogs that consume their own stool, consult with your veterinarian about a dietary change or additive to alter the characteristics of the stool
- Ensure that your dog has plenty of outlets for appropriate play, social engagement and exercise

Things to Avoid:

- Easy, unsupervised access to feces
- Punishment after the fact



For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

