

Why Dogs Eat Poop
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A behavior that is very common in dogs but not well understood is the eating of feces. Technically this is known as coprophagia. When given the chance, many dogs will eat the feces of other animals such as horses, deer and house cats. Raiding the litterbox is a common activity for dogs in households with cats. The behavior may be derived from the carnivorous (meat-eating) heritage of our pets. Carnivores frequently eat the internal organs and stomach contents (including poop) of the animals that they kill. As a result, eating the feces of other animals may be a normal extension of their carnivore behavior. There may be proteins and other nutrients in the feces that are eaten.

Less well understood is why some dogs eat the feces of other dogs or even their own feces. There are a number of animals that normally eat their own feces or the feces of other members of their species. These include rabbits, horses and rats. In these animals it is thought that eating of feces may provide nutrients, enzymes or bacteria that help with digestion.

It is not known why dogs eat their own feces. For some dogs it is a strong habit while others may never do it. One theory is that it may be related to boredom or stress. Another is that it is related to digestive deficiencies. Neither theory has any support at the present time. No one really knows what causes it.

Controlling or stopping coprophagia is very difficult. Veterinarians can supply a substance that can be added to a dog's food that makes the feces distasteful. Sometimes this is helpful. Most of the time, the best way to stop the behavior is to prevent the dog from getting to feces. Picking up soon after your dog has pooped can be the best way to prevent him from getting to his own feces.