



## COPROPHAGIA IN DOGS (EATING THEIR POOP)

### ***Why do dogs eat stools?***

While most cases of coprophagia appear to be purely behavioral, there are indeed numerous medical problems that can cause or contribute to coprophagia. These problems must first be ruled out before a purely behavioral diagnosis can be made.

### ***What are some of the medical causes?***

Any medical problem that leads to a decrease in absorption of nutrients, causes gastrointestinal upset or causes an increase in the appeal of the dog's stool, could lead to coprophagia. In addition to a complete physical examination, the puppy's diet and its stool frequency and consistency should be evaluated. Stool testing for parasites would be the minimum level of testing. If the stool is unusually soft or appears to be poorly digested, additional stool or blood tests may be warranted. Feeding a poorly digestible diet, underfeeding, and medical conditions that decrease absorption such as digestive enzyme deficiencies or parasites, could lead to malnutrition, vitamin and mineral deficiencies and therefore an increased appetite and possibly stool eating. In addition, if the stools contain large amounts of undigested food material, there is an increased likelihood that the puppy would eat the stools. Another possibility is that grass eating is either an innate or learned response to gastrointestinal upset, which may induce vomiting or to act as a source of fiber.



When adult dogs begin to eat stools, it may also be due to malabsorption of nutrients or nutritional deficiencies. In addition, any condition that might cause an increase in appetite or an unusual appetite, such as diabetes, Cushing's disease, thyroid disease, or treatment with certain drugs such as steroids may lead to an increase in stool eating. Dogs that are placed on extreme calorie restricted or poorly balanced diets may also begin to eat their stools. It should also be noted that if a dog develops a taste for a particular dog's stool, that dog should be tested for any type of condition that might lead to poor digestion of the food (and excess food elements remaining in the stool).