

# Are You Ready for Two Dogs?

Before you decide to add another dog to your household, it's important to honestly assess your current dog's needs and temperament, and your own lifestyle. Here are some questions to ask yourself –

When around other dogs is your dog shy, nervous, aggressive or uninterested?

certain situations?

Does he play well with other dogs in neutral settings but become territorial when other dogs come into your home or yard?

Is your dog elderly?

Does he have ongoing health problems?

Does your dog have any housebreaking problems?

Does your dog have any behavioral problems -- excessive barking, digging, separation anxiety, hyperactivity.

Does he get upset when other dogs try to get your attention or when you give other dogs affection?

Are you away from home a lot and you want another dog to keep your dog company?

Are you having any training problems, or difficulty controlling your dog in

Do you have an unaltered dog in your home – one that is not spayed or neutered?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, this is probably not the time to add another dog to your household.

If your dog has health or behavioral problems or is elderly, adding another dog is certain to make things worse.

If you're gone a lot, adding another dog will only ensure that when you come home from a long day at work you'll have two dogs wanting all of your attention and affection.

Be sure you're considering a second dog for the right reason – because your dog loves other dogs and because YOU are excited about the prospect of having a second dog.

# Managing a Multiple Dog Household

## The “Get Acquainted” Period

Before you bring the new dog home, pick up any toys, treats or other favorite items that might cause a conflict. Introduce them when you are home to monitor your dogs’ reaction.

Be sure you have set up a crate and/or a separate area where you can confine the new dog or puppy away from your other dog. Provide separate food bowls and at least initially, feed them at opposite ends of the kitchen or even in separate rooms if your dog is prone to food aggression. Feed on a schedule; never leave the food bowl down all day.

For the initial meeting, keep both dogs on a leash. It’s a mistake to let the new puppy or dog run into your current dog’s territory.

Watch for signs that your dog has had enough of the new puppy or new dog – snarling, growling, snapping, turning his head away and showing disinterest are all signs that he’s fed up and needs a time out. Be especially sensitive to this when introducing young puppies to older dogs.

Do not leave your new dog alone with your other dog until you are certain they will get along. The “get acquainted” period may take days, weeks, or months. With a puppy, they should be of a similar size before you attempt to leave them alone together. It’s okay to crate one dog and not the other. Free roam of the house is a privilege dogs earn by being trustworthy over time.

The new dog is...NEW...and you may want to lavish him with attention. Make sure you’re giving the other dog an equal amount of attention. Give him plenty of one-on-one time with you as well.

One of the more difficult things for people adding a new dog is that sometimes the new dog is more dominant than their other dog. They may think, “It’s not fair that Sassy takes the doggie bed and makes Buddy sleep on the floor. That’s Buddy’s bed. He was here first.” While this might seem unfair to you and I, as long as Buddy has accepted this new arrangement, interfering is just asking for trouble. We, as humans, do not speak dog language. We cannot read all of the quiet communication that lead Sassy and Buddy to work out this arrangement amongst themselves. In terms of managing your multiple dog household, be a manager, but not a micromanager.

## Fighting

In the instance of disputes, avoid the instinct to lay blame. Communication between dogs is often very subtle, and we miss out on a lot of “insults” passed back and forth before an actual confrontation. Rarely is one dog wholly a bully and one dog wholly a victim. If they are fighting, instead of laying blame and punishing one dog for what you believe happened, separate them immediately and take away the item in conflict (if there is any), and either put them both in a down/stay, or, if they’re still upset, put them in separate rooms for a cooling off period.

While some amount of conflict – of the “spit and growl” variety – is normal, if they are fighting to the point where there are injuries, it’s time to call in a professional behaviorist or trainer to assess the situation. Dog aggression isn’t something that can be handled over the Internet or with a book and sometimes well-intentioned meddling can make things much worse.

