

Introducing your New Dog to your Resident Dog

Dogs have a complex social structure that largely prevents fighting amongst one another. For this reason, it is important to know if your new dog is going to fit into your resident dog's "pack." Having two dogs continuously aggress towards one another in the same household is frustrating and dangerous to the dogs and to the people living in the home. Not all dogs enjoy the company of other dogs.

How to introduce your new dog to your resident dog:

Choose a Neutral Location

- The first meeting should be in a location that is new to your resident dog in order to reduce territorial behavior.
- A separate person should handle each dog.
- Both dogs should be leashed. Leashes can cause dogs to react with more aggression, but is necessary for safety reasons.
- Always have your resident dog meet the new dog in a neutral location before the new dog enters your home for the first time.

Be Safe and Non-threatening

- Allow both dogs the opportunity to smell each other. This should be done at a distance to prevent any physical injuries if they choose to fight.
- Do not allow the dogs to continually stare at one another as this is the first indication of a threat. You can break the eye contact by offering each dog a special treat.
- We recommend allowing the dogs at least 30 seconds to smell each other from a distance before bringing them closer together. In most cases, if one dog is going to show aggression, it will do it during that time period.

Watch for Threatening Body Language

- Continued eye contact, stiffening, stopping breathing, growling, hair standing up on the back, and snapping can all be signs that a dog is feeling threatened.
- You should never stop watching the two dogs' interaction.

When taking the dogs home

- You should have your new dog and resident dog in separate areas in the vehicle. This is most easily done by having each of them in a separate kennel.
- Your resident dog is more likely to guard objects and favorite places when the second dog is present, so keep leashes on both dogs for the first few days. This will allow you to control each dog if needed.
- Do not feed both dogs in the same room for the first couple of days.
- Do not leave both dogs alone together (without people present) for the first week or two.
- Pick up all toys and only give them to each dog when they can be monitored.
- The above recommendations will allow you enough time to see how the two dogs are going to react together when objects of interest are present.

One of the main reasons that dogs are returned to the Edmonton Humane Society is because of dog to dog aggression issues. These issues are sometimes caused by the owner's misunderstanding of the way the dogs communicate. One dog will usually assume the role of "leader of the pack" and will often demonstrate this leadership in the following way:

- You are petting the new dog and your resident dog comes over and wedges itself between you and the new dog. At this point, you need to stop petting the new dog and pet the resident dog. This should only be done if the resident dog is only pushing the new dog away, and not if the resident dog is showing aggression towards the new dog.

In this case, the "leader" is assuming that the owner is its "possession." You may see similar behaviors surrounding food, toys, sleeping areas, favorite areas, other animals, and other people. If an owner does not respect the dogs' hierarchy with each other, it can create aggression between the two dogs. Keep in mind that the new dog may end up being the leader. Humans cannot change the dogs' hierarchy structure.

Getting Help

If either of your dogs is becoming aggressive (growling, baring teeth, biting), you need to get help. Allowing them to 'work it out,' if not done correctly, can cause irreversible behavior problems.