

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO YOUR RESIDENT DOG

Friendships take time and understanding. The following suggestions are important to successfully introduce your new dog to your already owned dog(s). Before you bring your new dog home you need to make decisions on all of the following: toilet area, toys, treats, sleeping arrangements, feeding locations and daily exercises schedules.

Introduction Techniques

- **Choose a Good Time for Bringing Home a New Dog:** Vacation time is one of the better times to get a new animal. It allows you time to get to know the new animal and make the transition easier for all involved. Supervision, exercise and hanging out with together make fitting in go smoother.
- **Choose a Neutral Location:** Introduce the dogs in a neutral location so that your resident dog is less likely to view the new comer as a territorial intruder. Each dog should be handled by a separate person. With both dogs on a loose leash, take them to an area with which neither is familiar, such as a park or a neighbor's yard. If you frequently walk your resident dog in a park near your house, she may view that park as her territory, so choose another site that's unfamiliar to her. We require you bring your resident dog with you to the shelter and introduce the dogs before adopting the new dog.
- **Remain Calm:** You can trigger aggression by tensing up or holding the leash too tight. Keep the leashes loose and if the dogs tense up you can step away before the dogs get too close. Approach another dog on an arc and then walk side by side.
- **Use Positive Reinforcement:** From the first meeting, you want both dogs to expect "good things" to happen when they're in each other's presence. Let them sniff each other, which is normal canine greeting behaviour. As they do, talk to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice – never use a threatening tone of voice. Take the dogs for a walk and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals. Continue with the "happy talk," food rewards and simple commands.
- **Be Aware of Body Postures:** One body posture that indicates things are going well is a "play bow." One dog will crouch with her front legs on the ground and her hind end in the air. This is an invitation to play that usually elicits friendly behaviour from the other dog. Dogs use calming signals (see our Calming Signals handout) to communicate. Watch carefully for body postures that indicate aggressive response, including hair standing up on the other dog's back, teeth barking, deep growls, a stiff legged gait or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and positively getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dogs to them, have them sit or lie down and reward each with a treat. The dogs will become interested in the treats, which will prevent the situation from escalating into aggression. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater distance from each other. If one dog attempts to bite the other dog have a shaker can, whistle or air horn with you so that you can make a loud noise to startle the dogs into looking at you. At this point you can take their leashes and separate the dogs. Never pull back or put tension on leashes of two dogs sniffing or in close contact. This could cause the dogs to react stronger.

- **Taking The Dogs Home:** When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other's presence without fearful or aggressive responses, and the investigative greeting behaviours have tapered off, you can take them home. Whether you choose to take them in the same, or different vehicles, will depend on their size, how well they ride in the car, how trouble free the initial introduction has been and how many dogs are involved. Don't put your dogs in a position to make a mistake. Control and supervise the new dog at all times until both dogs are calm with each other. This could be a few minutes or a few weeks. If one dog is stiff and seems uncomfortable you can defuse the situation by removing one dog from the area. Some animals adapt very quickly to their new home. Others may take several months to settle in, allow for this and use lots of positive reinforcement and supervision and separation.
- **Special Time for Every Dog:** Each dog deserves some special alone time with you. You can play with one dog outside as the other dog has a tasty treat in their kennel. Make sure you pick up special treats if they are not consumed.
- **Multiple Dogs:** If you have more than one resident dog in your household, it may be best to introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one at a time. Two or more resident dogs may overwhelm the newcomer.

Introducing Puppies to Adult Dogs

Puppies usually pester adult dogs unmercifully. Before the age of four months, puppies may not recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling that they've had enough. Well socialized adult dogs with good temperaments may set limits with puppies with a growl or snarl. These behaviours are normal and should be allowed. Adult dogs that aren't well socialized, or that have a history of fighting with other dogs, may attempt to set limits with more aggressive behaviours, such as biting, which could harm the puppy. For this reason, a puppy shouldn't be left alone with an adult dog until you're confident the puppy isn't in any danger. Be sure to give the adult dog some quiet time away from the puppy, and perhaps, some individual attention.

When to Get Help

If the introduction of a new dog to a household doesn't go smoothly, contact your vet or professional trainer immediately. Dogs can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between dogs in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work and could make things worse.