



MULTI-PET HOMES

Success in a multi-pet home depends on your dog's own sociability with other dogs, your other pets, and your management skills. Remember that all dogs are individual in how they respond to other dogs in varying stages throughout their lives. Some dogs remain very social with other animals for a lifetime. Others prefer to be the only dog and aren't that interested in meeting and playing with other dogs. Many dogs enjoy some dogs but not others and may be a bit picky about their dog friends. Either way, it's a good idea to always go slow on meet-and-greets if you're introducing a new dog to ensure that you aren't putting even the most dog-friendly dog in a situation that may make him uncomfortable or set him up to fail.

When managing a multi-dog home, be aware of the following: Common Sense for Your Pack

- Establish yourself as a leader using positive leadership. Manage and supervise playtime. When things get too amped during play, don't let your dogs get pissy with each other, it's time for a time out. This can be a sit-stay or down-stay for a few minutes or longer. Keep the atmosphere calm. Dogs that are highly aroused can get into it and they may be less likely to listen to you. If, during play, your dogs are getting too amped, then a nice firm, "Hey!" should do it. However, sometimes they can get into the "not now, I'm busy" mode. This would be a time to take them out of play, get them to focus on you, then reward them when they do listen to you. Allow them to return to play when they're calm. Set limitations so there isn't a free-for-all, highly-aroused atmosphere. In the canine world, such an environment is a dicey state to be in.
- Make sure that when you or company comes in the door that you remain calm. Don't reward arousal in your dogs, and don't allow others to either! Everyone should ignore aroused behavior and pay attention to your dogs ONLY when they're calm. Dogs can get into fights over the excitement that you're home. Remember: your dogs being calm is key. When you get home after work, ignore them until they're calm....THEN pet them and calmly say hello. Dogs shouldn't be clamoring frantically around you or company. If you can't get your dogs to calm down around company for instance, then put them in a crate or another room while company is there or until they're calm. They will soon get the idea that if people are around and they are getting too amped they will be taken away to the fun and soon stop this behavior.
- Training is essential for any dog and definitely for a multi-dog home. Get your dogs into a good training class to learn proper leash manners around other dogs and good people-greeting manners. When all dogs in the house are trained, they are more likely to be a better influence on each other.
- Food can be a fight trigger with some dogs. Some dogs may guard their food, so it may be necessary to feed your dogs separately. Have training sessions where you reward your dogs for sitting and have all dogs look at you and not each other for leadership. This sends the message that when they're calm, patient, and focusing on you, good things happen. Reward calm, attentive behavior. This helps to establish you as a leader and keeper of all good things.
- Many dogs are great at sharing toys. However, some dogs aren't. Again, this is an individual thing so you may want to watch for signs of toy possession. If a certain high-value toy or treat sets one dog into "It's Mine!" mode, then it's not good to leave that item or items lying around. Be sure to supervise play when toys are involved. Sometimes dogs can scuffle over a spot on the couch or a spot next to you. In these cases, dogs shouldn't be allowed up on the furniture.

Earning Life Rewards

Most dogs do better in a household where they EARN their rewards. This is a good way to establish leadership. As an example, have your dog sit and wait for his food bowl, have him sit and wait for a pet, etc. Dogs sense this leadership in a home and this helps them to feel that someone is in charge. It's up to you to establish boundaries. Individual dogs may feel more secure and not feel as compelled to take over the pack and establish order if the humans are doing it for them. This is done by examples of the above in a positive way not by force. You hold the good stuff, the treats, car rides, the resources, etc. Use these life rewards to reinforce proper, calm, friendly behavior among your dogs.

Connect with Your Dogs

Having a solid connection with your dog is important. Your dog may be more willing to please when there is a strong connection to you. Sharing love and affection with your dog when he's relaxed is a good way to build and keep a connection with him. Remember not to give affection while he's overly aroused or being ill-mannered. Building and keeping this connection facilitates good leadership with each dog so that as a pack they may be more willing to look to you for guidance.

Remember:

- Puppies are the life of the party, but their sociability with other dogs may change as they mature. This change can happen in any dog of any breed. Please be aware of these changes if you've added a pup to your pack.
- Additionally, although multi dog success has much to do with the personality type in the dogs you pick and put together, it's your management that's key.
- If you're bringing a new dog into your family and already have a dog, don't just bring the new dog in a plop him down in your house. This may make your resident dog feel territorial. It's his house! You want your dog to like this new dog. Walk them side by side in a neutral territory first. Don't rush them up face to face! Let them get used to each other's presence before allowing physical contact. Then bring them closer and closer slowly. Sometimes it can take dogs a bit to get to get to know each other. Does your dog like this new dog? How do THEY feel about each other? If you have a good match, proceed. If you don't feel like you have a match, or if you don't feel confident and comfortable with doing the dog-to-dog introduction on your own, call in a trainer to help you. (For more info on dog-to-dog intros, go to [Dog-Dog Intros](#)).

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