

Information Sheet - Introducing a New Dog to the Household

Wouldn't we all like a peaceful setting like the picture below, all dogs in the household relaxed and liking each other's company?



Unfortunately it can take some time, just like all good relationships. Whether it's a foster dog, a dog you're minding, a new puppy or adult dog, there are some simple rules to follow and management strategies to put in place to ensure all goes smoothly.

Have you made the right choice?

Consider how your existing pet/s will cope with a new dog. What sort of dogs does your existing dog usually get along with? Male, female, small dog, large dog, older dog or a puppy? What will fit in best with your household?

There are studies done that conclude dogs in the same house who are the same or similar age, same sex, same breed and similar temperament will have a higher incidence of inter household aggression (Stabler 2003). So choose wisely!

Introductions

Try to build the dog's relationship by meeting for several short walks in a neutral location if possible. If that isn't possible, take the dogs for a walk together from your home. Mutual walks can build relationships as the dogs don't have to interact with each other, just be enjoying something nice together. They don't have to be close together like Molly and Rubee are in this picture. Try giving more space to start with and keep leads nice and loose!



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Separations

Even if the dogs get along beautifully on walks and play dates, doesn't mean they will get along when living together 24 hours a day. Make sure you have a separate area for your new addition. This can be a separate part of the yard, a separate room, a crate or exercise pen. We strongly recommend crate training puppies as it makes it easier to toilet train them and teaches them how to be calm and settled in the house around other pets. Existing pets, especially older pets, should have time apart from the new addition, and also a place to retreat to if it all gets too much.



Read Body Language

It is important to be able to read the more subtle body language signals that may indicate a dog is feeling scared or anxious. Have a read through our sheet on Body Language so you can start practising.

Supervision

We recommend supervising ALL interactions between new and existing pets until you are confident they can resolve small conflicts amicably. If you are unsure, set up a video camera to check interactions when you aren't around.

Leave alone only for short periods of time initially and allow controlled interactions and short play times only. This picture to the right is a great idea for set up in a family home. The new puppy is separated from the older dog for when you can't supervise. This prevents the younger more rambunctious puppy



from trying to play with the older dog too often, risking the older dog getting snappy!

Management and Training

Your new dog will take some time to understand your 'house rules' – where he/she is supposed to sleep, 'no go' zones and the daily routine. A few standard rules apply for food such as feeding meals, bones and other high value treats separately.

Make sure you TEACH your new dog what you expect of them, rather than expecting them to learn after a few days. Repetition and positive reinforcement will get you there.

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Building Positive Associations

Along with walking together, you can also build positive associations by sharing treats and playing games. Basically, when the 'new' dog is around, good things happen!

If you notice any 'jealous' signs such as one dog being pushy or getting snappy, take it back a notch to mutual walks and more careful management. Contact us if you need help!



Managing Stress

Bringing a new dog into the house can be very stressful for all involved! Try using a pheromone product called Adaptil, which can help reduce stress and anxiety in dogs (see your vet). There are also other Holistic ways to help reduce stress such as bush flower essences and other herbs.

Enjoy your new dog! Remember that it was your choice to bring home another dog, so set all dogs up for success and take it slow to build the relationships positively.

References and Further Reading

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