

INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER TO THE FAMILY

It is easy to do all the wrong things when adding a new dog to the family. In the excitement, you may give little thought to the well being of your resident dog as you lavish the new addition with attention. Some forethought and basic planning can go a long way toward providing a smooth introduction.

BEFORE THE NEW PUPPY OR ADULT DOG ARRIVES

- 1) Remove all the valued resources (such as rawhides, toys and chewies) of the resident dog from the house for the first few days. This will insure that fights over possessions will be at a minimum. As the dogs become more comfortable with the change in their pack structure, you may slowly reintroduce these items under supervision.
- 2) Let your resident dog become familiar with any new items that will be introduced along with the new dog. Dog beds and feeding bowls can be left out for the resident dog to investigate. Do not leave them in place permanently, this could allow the resident dog to claim them as his own. An old T-shirt or rag with the new dog's smell can be added to these items to further prepare for the new introduction.
- 3) Maintain the resident dog's routine both before and after the new dog has been introduced. For instance, feed and exercise your dog at his accustomed times.

After carefully preparing for your new addition, the time will finally arrive for you to pick him up. Here are several very important rules to remember for the actual introduction of the new dog to the resident dog.

TIPS FOR THE FIRST MEETING

- 1) Find a neutral location, like a park or a friend's yard for the initial introductions. This will minimize the chance that the resident dog will view the newcomer as a territorial intruder.
- 2) Consider it your job, in the critical first few days to insure that good things happen when the dogs are together. Be upbeat and talk to the dogs in a happy tone of voice. Offer special treats, reserved only for these meetings, to each dog – resident dog first.
- 3) It is important that the first few meetings are brief. Exposing the dogs gradually to each other will allow them to comfortably accept the major changes in their lives. If your household includes multiple dogs, introduce each dog separately and briefly, to the adoptee.
- 4) Integrating a new dog into your established pack should be approached with care and consideration. Proceed slowly. It is far better to be over cautious than to act recklessly causing unnecessary stress. Stress can turn to aggression in the canine world, causing fights and possible injury. It is far easier and safer to work through the process slowly than to establish bad patterns that take months of training to correct.

WHEN PROBLEMS OCCUR

Even after taking every precaution in introducing unfamiliar dogs, problems can still erupt. Canines can be very complicated beings with thoughts and emotions quite different from our own. Consider the resident dog's point of view, for instance. He has

co-existed in his established pack for what may seem to him to be forever. Suddenly, a stranger is thrust into the hierarchy. A range of feelings from fear to dominance may overtake your old friend. This is only natural. It is your job as leader of the pack to manage the pack change. Supervise all introductions for at least the first week. You should know the preliminary signs of aggression (stiff stance, hard stare, raised hackles) so that you can best prepare to act.

As leader of your pack, it is important that you lead. Teach all dogs basic obedience and set fair and consistent ground rules. It is also your right and responsibility as leader to police fights between your dogs. If fighting over and above normal corrective interactions occurs, stop the fight (do not grab collars! Use a remote device such as a citronella spray {available from Alpha Canine Academy at 382-5937}), then calmly reprimand both dogs equally. Emotional reactions tend only to fuel the fire.

Most importantly, allow a natural hierarchy to develop. Dogs have a pecking order that is normally worked out best without interference from us. If one of the dogs shows submissive signs to the other, reinforce the submissive behavior even if the submission is coming from the resident dog. This may run counter to your instincts since you feel the resident dog has seniority but sabotaging the natural hierarchy is counterproductive.

Many times dogs can be introduced without noticeable conflict. Dogs can be amazingly accommodating when their nature allows. By taking precautions and following these good, common sense tips, you will help to insure a smooth transition for both your resident dog and the new family addition.

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