



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Multi Dog Households

Are you feeling outnumbered or challenged living with multiple dogs in your home? These suggestions can help you keep the peace (and your peace of mind!):

- **Train each dog separately.** When your dogs are together, it can be very difficult to give each of them the training they require. If one dog in your bunch is particularly rowdy, consider enrolling him in a basic obedience class. Also, if your dogs -- as a group -- are developing bad habits (i.e. they run barking to the door every time the doorbell rings), work with each dog on his or her own to overcome the issue. For example, have one sit and wait by the door when a guest arrives. If the dogs receive training on their own, they'll be easier to control in a group.
- **Work on basic manners.** As described above, work with each dog separately to teach basic commands (sit, down, stay, etc.). Once they are responding, implement house "rules" to make your everyday routine calmer. For example, during feeding time, each dog must sit and wait before receiving food. Or, when it's time for a walk, each dog must sit before getting leashed. These rules sound simple, but can make a big difference when you are dealing with multiple dogs. The dogs will quickly learn that they need to do a certain behavior before they earn a reward. Chaotic moments like dinner time and walk time will be less stressful.
- **Protect your senior dog.** Do you have an older dog who's stressed by your younger, more energetic dog or dogs? Be sure to teach your younger dog basic manners (see above). Also, give your older guy periods of rest during the day, "down" time away from the other dog/s. And, be sure to schedule quality time with just you and your beloved senior!
- **Manage as much as possible.** Brainstorm immediate, simple solutions to a problem. For example, if two dogs are growling at each other over a food bowl, feed the dogs in separate rooms. If a rawhide bone causes fighting, don't have them around when the dogs are together. If one dog constantly barks at other dogs when you are all out together on walks, you can walk the reactive dog alone.
- **Expect some squabbles.** Dogs -- just like us people -- can get on each others' nerves when sharing living spaces. Though an occasional scuffle can be normal, watch carefully for these red flags which could indicate a more serious problem:
  - If one dog is seriously hurting the other dog (puncture wounds, lacerations), seek immediate assistance from a veterinarian and animal behaviorist. If the injuries are very serious, you may need to consider re-homing one dog.
  - If two dogs who rarely or never fought before suddenly get into frequent altercations, consult a behaviorist. You may also want to consult your vet, as medical issues can be responsible for sudden behavioral changes.

We know many people have room in their homes and hearts for multiple dogs, and we are here to assist if any issues arise. PHS/SPCA's free Behavior Helpline is 650/340-7022 x783.

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**