

INTRODUCING A NEW DOG TO A RESIDENT PET

Many adopters have questions about the possibility of adding another dog to their household. "How will Duke react?" "Will the two of them get along?" "Is this going to work?" Quite frankly, it's hard to predict what success you'll have in adding a new dog to your household because there are such vast differences among the various breeds of dogs and between any two individuals even in the same breed. In addition, dogs have, to varying degrees, innate tendencies toward territoriality and dominance which can lead to problems when another dog enters the scene.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate place to make some remarks about dominance, since it is the single most important factor in determining what success you will have in introducing a new dog to your home. For two or more dogs to live peacefully together, they need to establish a dominance hierarchy (pecking order) which they all accept. Often the question of who is dominant is settled by a mere stare from one dog to another who averts his eyes and says, in effect, "OK, you can be the boss if you like," and it's over before the owner observes what happened. In other cases, the issue of who will be dominant is not settled so easily and the two dogs will engage in more overt behaviors like placing their forepaws on the shoulders of the other animal or pressing the chin down on his back and shoulders. If the issue still is not settled, further aggression (growling, baring teeth, snapping, or outright fighting) is likely to occur.

Why do we need to know about dominance order? Because it's important that the owner not interfere with the order that the dogs establish. Often caring dog owners will observe that one dog constantly takes precedence over the other and try to "make it up" to the subordinate animal by giving him preferential treatment. Don't. You need to support the order they establish rather than promote fighting by trying to make things equal. Put the dominant dog's food bowl down first, let him get in the car first, and greet him first when you return home. [*Note: Remember that all human family members, from grandma to the youngest child, must be recognized as higher in the dominance order by family dogs or serious problems can result.*] There is no fairness or equality in the minds of dogs. Size, age, gender, and temperament play roles in establishing dominance, but it's difficult to predict who will be the dominant animal; it's something that the dogs must work out.

But, having said all that, we do know that many of our adopters have come back to select another dog for their home and found it a rewarding experience. The following suggestions on how to select and introduce another dog should make the process easier.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO THE RESIDENT DOG

Whichever dog you choose, it's important to take the time to introduce him properly to your resident pet, which means considering the social and territorial natures of canines. Here are some tips that should maximize your chances for success:

- ♥ Introduce the dogs in unfamiliar, neutral territory to minimize the chances of the resident dog regarding the newcomer as a territorial threat. A park where you don't normally take your dog would be good, but an unfamiliar fenced yard would be even better.
- ♥ Make the introduction a happy experience. Each dog should be on leash and handled by a separate person. Bring them close together and watch how they react. As the dogs sniff each other, the usual canine greeting behavior, both should be praised in a happy tone, "Such a good dog! You have a friend to play with!" After a short greeting period, both handlers should call or bring the dogs to them and reward them with treats or praise for their good behavior. Your aim is to get them both to associate the presence of the other with good things like attention, praise, petting, affection, and sometimes food. Take them for a walk around the area, letting them stop and investigate each other at intervals.
- ♥ If the introduction is going well, give the two more freedom to interact by using long 30-to-40-foot leads or just dropping their leashes if they are in a fenced area. Be alert to interrupt their interaction at the first sign of aggressive response like hair rising along the back, prolonged staring, growling, baring the teeth, or walking stiff legged. Don't punish; distract their attention to something else by calling or bringing to the handler and rewarding good behavior with praise and food. Repeat the process for short periods, separating them before they display aggressive behavior.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO THE RESIDENT CAT

If you plan to bring a dog into a home with a resident cat, your best bet is, in most cases, a very young puppy, one too little to accomplish much barking or chasing of the cat. Although most cats recognize an 8-week-old puppy isn't much of a threat, you will need to monitor their time together at first to guard against injury such as a slash across the puppy's eyes. It is possible to combine unfamiliar adult dogs and adult cats, but it may take a lot of work and time; it all depends on the personalities of the dog and cat. The following routine will maximize your chances for success in introducing a new dog to your cat:

- ♥ Before you attempt a face-to-face meeting, keep the animals separated and first let them get used to the smell of the other and be aware the other's presence in a non-threatening manner. Feed them closer and closer on opposite sides of the closed door separating their areas until they can eat calmly right next to the door. Hopefully, they will begin to associate the presence of the other animal with good things like eating. It would also be a good idea to begin teaching (or reviewing) some basic obedience commands ("sit," "down," "stay") to your new dog in preparation for the face-to-face meetings.
- ♥ Keep the first face-to-face meetings short and both animals controlled. One person should be with the leashed dog, commanding him to "sit" or "down" while the other person holds the cat on his/her lap on the other side of the room. If the dog behaves aggressively, he should be distracted by pulling on the lead or giving a command. Both animals should be praised and rewarded with special tidbits of food for calm behavior. Reward for good behavior is far better than punishment because you want the dog to associate pleasant things with the cat's presence. Gradually bring the two closer until they have the chance to investigate each other face-to-face. The behavior of the animals will tell you whether this will take one or many short sessions.
- ♥ If the cat and dog seem happy together in the controlled situation, the next step is to allow them loose in the room together but be certain that the cat has an escape route or a safe

place to hide in case the dog becomes excited. Keep them separated when you are gone until you are sure that they can get along. If this step does not go well, go back and spend more time on the earlier introductory stages.

Always be cautious and concerned for the safety of your cat and dog when introducing adult animals, even if they have previously had an amicable relationship with an individual of the other species.