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Animal Behaviorist

Before you get that second dog...

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So you're thinking about adding another dog to your family? Before you act, consider the following questions:

1. Do you have additional funds to pay for a second set of yearly vaccinations, food, toys, crates, licenses, and training classes? (The average yearly cost of adding a second dog into your household is about \$350).
2. Do you have spare time right now that you can willingly fill with cleaning the yard, grooming a second animal, training a second dog, feeding and exercising a second dog?
3. Are you ready to deal with some canine rivalry? Dogs have a natural pecking order: one dog must be dominant and the other submissive. To avoid any aggression, you need to treat the dominant dog as the "top dog" even if you think it is not fair. Your old dog may be the submissive member in the pack. Are you ready to treat him as such?
4. Is your current dog friendly to most other dogs? If your dog is a bully, the chances of finding a second dog to get along with your dog are quite slim. However, training your current dog can

make him more accepting of other dogs. So, if you really want a second dog, attend a training class with your current dog first.

5. Does your old dog have any behavioral problems, such as excessive barking? Dogs mimic and learn from each other. So, if you are getting a new dog in the hopes your old dog will not bark as much, you may end up with two barking dogs.

6. Have you recently gotten married, divorced, had a baby or job change? It may be better to wait until all major changes in your life are settled.

Scoring your answers

If you have answered all the questions above and have come up with even one “no” on questions 1 through 5, then this is a bad time for you to add a second dog to your household. If you answered questions 1-5 with a “yes” and question 6 with a “no,” then you are in a good position to adopt a second dog into your household! It will take some extra work, patience, and understanding on your part to learn to live with two dogs, but your new dog and hopefully your current dog, will thank you for it! For more information on animal behavior, visit www.hssv.org and click on behavior.