

Before You Bring A Second Dog Into Your Home

So you're thinking about adding another dog to your family? Congratulations and our sympathy at the same time. A second dog can add an extra special family member, and yet, at the same time, provide many headaches. Our goal here at the Humane Society Silicon Valley is to place each dog in a permanent, loving home. In order for us to reach this objective, we need your help. You can support us in this aim by being fully prepared for a second dog and what it may do to your family. Please answer the following questions truthfully:

ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU GET THAT SECOND DOG:

- 1. DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL FUNDS (MONEY)** 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? You can count on spending about an additional five hours per week with your dogs when you add that second dog to your household.
- 3. DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO PAY FOR DAMAGE YOUR SECOND DOG MAY CAUSE TO YOUR HOUSE OR YARD?** (Or that your first dog, or heaven forbid, both dogs may do to your home?) Adding a new dog can cause your old dog to misbehave. Then you may have two destructive dogs.
- 4. ARE YOU READY TO DEAL WITH SOME CANINE RIVALRY?** Whenever more than one dog lives in a household, the dogs will establish a relationship determined by the outcomes of interactions between the dogs. Owners cannot choose whether the dogs establish a hierarchy. When a new dog is brought into the family, the social balance is upset because the newcomer's place is unclear. Your relationship with your current resident dog may change when a new dog comes into the household, are you ready for that?
- 5. IS YOUR CURRENT DOG FRIENDLY TO MOST OTHER DOGS AND PEOPLE?** The chance of finding a second dog to get along with your dog who may be a bully 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. If your current dog is not friendly toward people, your new dog may learn to be shy as well. Do you really want two fearful dogs in your home?
- 6. DOES YOUR CURRENT DOG HAVE ANY BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS EXCESSIVE BARKING, DESTRUCTION, AGGRESSION OR FEARFULNESS?** 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 instead of none like you planned. Or vice versa! The new dog may teach your old dog that barking, digging, getting into the garbage, stealing your underwear, or chewing is awfully fun! A dog who already has behavioral problems IS NOT cured by getting him a playmate. In fact, in many cases, they become worse. You need to work with your current dog to resolve his behavioral problems before you can successfully add a second dog to your family.
- 7. HAVE YOU RECENTLY HAD A CHANGE IN YOUR FAMILY SUCH AS MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, DEATH, A JOB CHANGE, A NEW BABY, A NEW ROOMMATE, OR A RECENT MOVE TO A NEW RESIDENCE?** These are all very high stressors that can cause you and your dog to react negatively to the addition of a new friend. It is better to wait until all major changes in your life are settled and your home environment is once again serene.

8. DO YOU REALLY LIKE YOUR DOG THE WAY HE/SHE IS NOW? Adding a second dog to your household WILL change your dog in many ways. Are you ready to accept that? If you really like a dog that is people-friendly, then do not get another dog. Dogs, given the opportunity, will bond to each other, rather than to you. Think of it this way: if your dog is spending more time with his new buddy (let's say at least 12 hours a day), who do you think he is going to be more attached to? The one he spends the most time with, of course!

SCORING YOUR ANSWERS

If you have truthfully 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 family member to your household. Wait until you can answer questions 1 through 5 with a resounding "YES" before looking for that special addition. If you answered "YES" to questions 6 or 7, then you need to think very long and hard about adding a second dog to your household as it may have disastrous effects on your entire family "pack."

Question 8 was added just to help you understand that your dog will change with the addition of another dog in your household. Some people report their old dogs are happier and more playful with another dog around, but more often than not, people report that their old dog seems unhappy and unsure about things.

Did you answer all questions 1-5 with a "YES" and questions 6-7 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!

Recommended Reading:

- **Feeling Outnumbered? – How to Manage and Enjoy a Multi-Dog Household** – Patricia McConnell & Karen London