



TIPS 'N' TAILS

PRESENTED BY BARK BUSTERS HOME DOG TRAINING

Training with Technology

Article contributed by Bark Busters Dale and Vikki Turner

It's one thing to worry about how stressed out a dog with separation anxiety must be while you are away from your home and wonder what he might be doing to cope with it—it's another thing entirely to watch it happen.

This was the experience that led Jaye and Michelle Heter, of Phoenix, Arizona, to call their local Bark Busters trainers, Dale and Vikki Turner. Worried about their 1-year-old Brittany spaniel, Henry, whose separation anxiety symptoms worsened after the death of their other dog at the end of 2010, the Heters decided to use a video camera to film Henry in his crate after they left the house.

"That's when it really hit home," Jaye says. "He was barking, howling, biting at the cage, trying to lift the front of the cage off, and then he would start digging on the side of the cage. He did that for most of the hour and 45 minutes of the video."

The Heters tried a variety of solutions—pheromones, self-training from Jaye's previous experience with working dogs

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Michelle Heter with Henry and Dale Turner



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Tips for Managing a Multi-Dog Household

If you currently have one dog and are considering getting another, think carefully first. While the joy of dog ownership grows with each new "family" member you add, the challenges of managing the household can also increase.

First evaluate the reasons why you want to get a second dog. If it's to get a companion for your single dog—which can be a good idea if you are gone for much of the day—this will work well if your single dog is well-behaved. However, if your dog's behavior is less than exemplary and you are thinking that adding a second dog will change his behavior, you will in most cases simply end up with two naughty dogs.

Selecting Your Second Dog

Temperament

Select a breed and temperament (personality) that will complement your resident dog. Remember, temperament has nothing to do with a dog's size, breed or upbringing—temperament is something innate in a dog. A dog's temperament has a lot to do with how easily he can be trained, and while good training can improve a dog's behavior, it cannot change a dog's temperament.

If you have an energetic dog, choose a second dog that is also energetic, so the two can play together and keep up with each other. If you have an older or more laid-back dog, avoid getting an exuberant puppy or a very active breed of dog.

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in the military, another trainer through daycare, other organic calming products—all with little success. Once they attempted leaving Henry in a room, only to come back 45 minutes later to a torn-apart desk and shredded papers; another time, he chipped a tooth trying to get out of his cage.

“It just progressively got worse. We were having our neighbors let him out during the day, I was driving home, I was working from home, we were taking him to daycare three or four days a week,” Jaye says.

At their veterinarian’s recommendation, the Heters called the Turners in April 2011 and showed Dale the videos they had taken of Henry’s panicked behavior after they left the house.

“In 5 years of training dogs, it was one of the worst cases of separation anxiety I’ve ever seen,” says Dale. “It was just heartbreaking.” After explaining the Bark Busters system and techniques, Dale suggested moving Henry’s crate from an isolated room to their bedroom and having him sleep in the crate, instead of the bed, at night.

Next, Dale asked the Heters to “set the scene” as often as possible by putting Henry in his crate and pretending to leave so that they could correct his anxious behavior—from just outside the house or another room—as soon as it started.


In addition, Dale worked with the Heters’ vet to prescribe anti-anxiety medication.

Although they were seeing results, Dale says, “Jaye and Michelle were having trouble knowing when Henry was just moving around or whimpering a little, as opposed to showing anxiety behaviors that they were most concerned about stopping, like digging or biting.”

The solution? Perhaps inspired by the video technology that helped them realize the severity of Henry’s separation anxiety, Michelle had an idea: visual baby monitors.

“The baby monitors gave Jaye and Michelle the perfect timing they needed to turn Henry’s behavior around very quickly,” says Dale. The highlight of the training came after about six weeks, when the Heters videotaped Henry for over an hour and a half while they were gone; he remained calm and relaxed the entire time, with no signs of anxiety.

The Heters have also used their new training techniques to teach Henry valuable off-leash skills, such as coming back to heel position on command and staying on the grass—and off a rattlesnake-infested gravel area—at their local dog park.

“From where we were to where we are now...it’s just unbelievable,” says Jaye. “This training has saved me from having to find a new home for Henry.” 

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Gender

Selecting the right gender can make a big difference in ensuring household harmony. Generally, dogs of the opposite sex make the best pairing for pets. Thus, if you have a male, get a female, and vice versa. Depending on the individual dogs, two males will also generally get along. However, two females is the most likely combination to result in disharmony. Whatever the gender, spay or neuter your dogs. A desexed dog is generally more easygoing with both humans and other dogs.

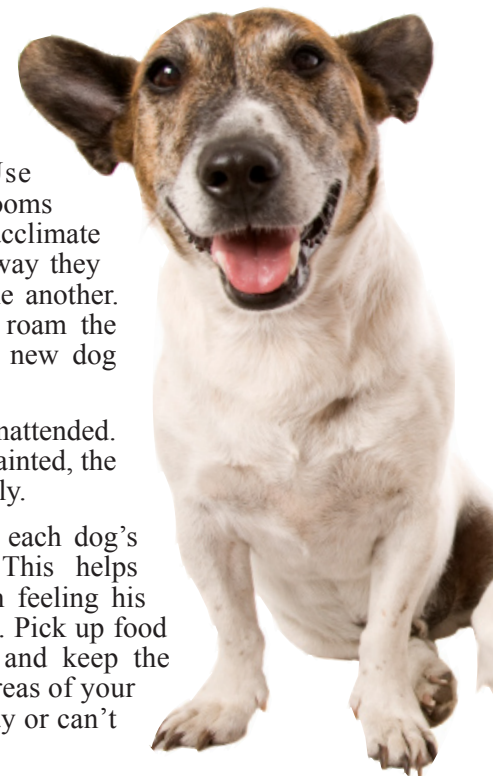
Establishing and Maintaining Order

Managing a multi-dog household is quite different from living in a single-dog home. The key to maintaining household harmony lies with you, the “pack” leader. All dogs in your home must respect you as a leader, and you must act accordingly by creating and consistently applying boundaries for their behavior with you and with each other.

As the household leader, it is important that you uphold and reinforce the established order. This hierarchy always should begin with you, followed by the other humans and then the dogs.

Managing the New Dog in Your Home

- Establish boundaries. Use baby gates and close off rooms and areas while all the pets acclimate to the new situation. This way they can see and get used to one another. Allow the resident dog to roam the house, while confining the new dog behind a barrier at first.
- Never leave new dogs unattended. When dogs are getting acquainted, the situation can change suddenly.
- Create separate areas for each dog’s eating/sleeping activities. This helps keep the resident dog from feeling his territory is being threatened. Pick up food bowls after feeding time, and keep the dogs confined in separate areas of your home any time you are away or can’t watch them.



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Combating Pet Obesity



Just as for humans, obesity is a growing and costly problem for the 77 million-plus pet dogs in America; a study in 2010 by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention found that over 50 percent of dogs are overweight or obese.

Perception is part of the problem; a dog that may appear healthy, or even “cute” with rolls of fat, is often suffering from excess weight. To the average human, five extra pounds may not seem like a big deal, but for a medium-size dog whose ideal weight is 30 pounds, for example, this extra weight can be life threatening. Obesity in dogs can result in arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease and other conditions that are not only painful for your dog, but also require expensive medical attention.

The best thing dog owners can do is to consult their veterinarian on what a healthy weight is for their dog and work together to put a plan of action into place. Switch your dog to a well-balanced, appropriately portioned canine diet. Look for foods containing only high-quality ingredients, with no extras like protein fillers, unspecified animal by-products or chemical preservatives. Get some exercise! Walk your dog, take him to the dog park, or just toss a ball for him to fetch around the yard. And make time to train your dog regularly using a method that doesn't rely on sugar- and fat-loaded treats. Making your dog think burns calories too!

Excess weight in pets can decrease their life expectancy by up to 2.5 years; you can increase both your dog's quality and quantity of life by keeping him at a healthy weight.

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- Supervise doggie playtime to prevent the dogs from getting overexcited and possibly injuring one another. If one dog begins to bully or growl at the other, interrupt their play and separate them for a few minutes. Praise them when they are playing well together.
- If you are walking your two dogs at the same time, walk both dogs on one side, with the more confident dog on the outside. This puts the other dog in the middle, a natural position for the less influential dog to be protected by the leaders.
- Avoid letting the dogs maintain eye contact with one another, which can be a preamble for more aggressive action. If one dog begins to stare at another, command the staring dog to sit or lie down, to break his concentrated gaze. After the situation is defused, release the dog from the command.

Feeding Time

Sharing is not a canine trait. Food is vital for survival, so food-guarding is instinctive. Take extra care to be wary around

your dogs at feeding time, as bad feeding habits can lead to fights.

- Do not allow the dogs to steal from one another's bowls.
- Pick up the food bowls after the dogs have eaten.
- To avoid mealtime issues, feed the dogs in separate areas or rooms, or in their crates. Feeding separately also discourages dogs from gulping food down too quickly. Their digestion will improve markedly if they feel safe enough to take their time over their food.
- Old and ailing dogs in particular should be allowed to eat in peace.

Toys and Other “High-value” Items

Being fair-minded and treating all dogs equally will go a long way toward ensuring a harmonious household.

- Be sure to have duplicates of toys—including brain-stimulating puzzle toys like KONG® products or the Buster® Cube—dog beds, food dishes, etc., to keep everyone content and to decrease occurrences of resource-guarding behavior.
- Give “high-value” toys—ones the dogs really covet, such as bones or furry squeaky toys—only when the dogs are alone, such as in their crates. Put the items away after the dogs are released from their crates.



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Crates

No matter how many dogs are in your family, a crate (or pet carrier) provides a natural safe haven for a dog and helps him feel secure.

- Use separate crates. Be sure each dog has his own crate and bedding.
- Keep all the crates in same area or room.
- If you need to set up boundaries at any time, direct the dogs to go to their crates, even if it is only one dog that is acting naughty or anxious. While they may not like being separated from you, they will each feel secure.

Avoiding Sibling Rivalry

Yes, dogs can exhibit sibling rivalry just as humans do! Sibling rivalry can be sporadic or extreme. Problems usually occur between two dogs of the same sex, two littermates or between dogs of similar strength of temperament.

Regardless of the reason for the sibling rivalry, the common thread throughout is an owner who is failing to express leadership in a canine way. Sibling rivalry often starts because the owner has not shown the dogs enough leadership. The dogs think they need to compete for top position in the pack.

One of the most frequent reasons for sibling rivalry is that the leader of the two dogs feels that his higher position is

being diminished because the subordinate has an alliance with the owner.

Work on making the dogs feel cared for individually so that they will not want to compete with each other. Be sure each dog gets equal helpings of your love and affection, and plenty of time for exercise and training.

Remember to devote ample time to each dog individually for both training and play. If one dog is much older or less energetic than the other, be sure you give him time and space to himself so he can rest and feel secure.

Be mindful of all your dogs' body language. Staring, in particular, can be a trigger that will start a fight. Diffuse the situation by sending both dogs to their crates.

Knowing When to Get Help

We have dogs because we enjoy their antics and companionship. However, if the dogs don't get along, this creates tension, disharmony and safety concerns in the home. It's worth your efforts to learn about, observe and take steps to manage your multiple dogs' behaviors when they live under one roof. A qualified dog trainer such as a Bark Busters dog behavioral therapist can help resolve conflicts between dogs and can provide ways to help you all live in a peaceful, happy household. 🐾

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