

LIVING IN A MULTI- DOG HOUSEHOLD

(OR ... YOU HAVE HOW MANY
DOGS???)



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UNITED STATES HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS

- **77.5 million owned dogs in the United States**
- **39% of US households overall own at least one dog**
- **Of these:**
 - **67% own one dog**
 - **24% own two dogs**
 - **9% own three or more dogs**
- **On average, owners own 1.7 dogs**

**Statistics from the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2009-2010
National Pet Owners Survey**

CHALLENGES FACED IN MULTIPLE DOG HOUSEHOLDS

- **More dogs to train**
- **Managing interaction of several dogs with people within the home**
- **Managing interaction of several dogs with people outside the home**
- **Managing access to important resources**
- **Managing the relationship between the dogs within the house**

MULTIDOG HOUSEHOLDS

CONTROL



CHAOS



TRADITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING MULTIPLE DOG HOUSEHOLDS



- **Treat the dogs like a pack**
 - **Based on concepts extrapolated from what many thought was normal wolf social behavior**
 - **Determine who is alpha**
 - **Support this dog's position**
 - **Let one dog train the other dogs**

PROBLEMS THAT CAN ARISE

- **Picking the wrong dog**
 - **Pushy does not mean most able to take the “lead”**
- **Supported dog may start to “pick on” other dogs**



NAGGING

If all else fails, try saying it louder.

PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS

- **Often based on concepts of the alpha dog**
- **Based on inaccurate studies, anecdotal evidence and myth**
 - **Dogs are not wolves**
 - **Dogs are not pack animals**



DOGS AND WOLVES



DOGS VERSUS WOLVES

■ Free-Ranging Dogs

- Scavenging as primary food acquisition
- More casual and briefer associations with other dogs (“loose, transitory associations”)
- Males do not participate in rearing of young
- Puppies leave prior to 2 years

■ Wolves

- Hunting as primary food acquisition
- Familial groups
- Males participate in rearing of young
- Young remain with group until social maturity (2 years)

SO WHAT?



- **If the concept of dogs as pack animals is faulty, we need to reassess how we handle these situations**

CANINE SOCIAL STRUCTURE



- **Free-ranging dogs**
 - Loose affiliations
 - Access to resources
 - Estrous

- **In a household**
 - No chance for loose affiliation – can't "choose" to leave
 - Control over resources very important

KEYS TO SUCCESS IN A MULTIDOG HOUSEHOLD

- **Physical control**
- **Verbal control**
- **Focus and responsiveness to owner**
- **Be able to read the dogs to intervene early**



KEYS TO SUCCESS IN A MULTIDOG HOUSEHOLD



■ Physical control

- Baby gates
- Drag lines
- Collars, harnesses, head halters

KEYS TO SUCCESS IN A MULTIDOG HOUSEHOLD

- **Verbal control**
 - **Name orientation**
 - **Go to place**
 - **Interrupter words**
 - **Group**
 - **Individual**
 - **Basic commands**
 - **Sit**
 - **Stay**
 - **Down**
 - **Off**
 - **Leave it**



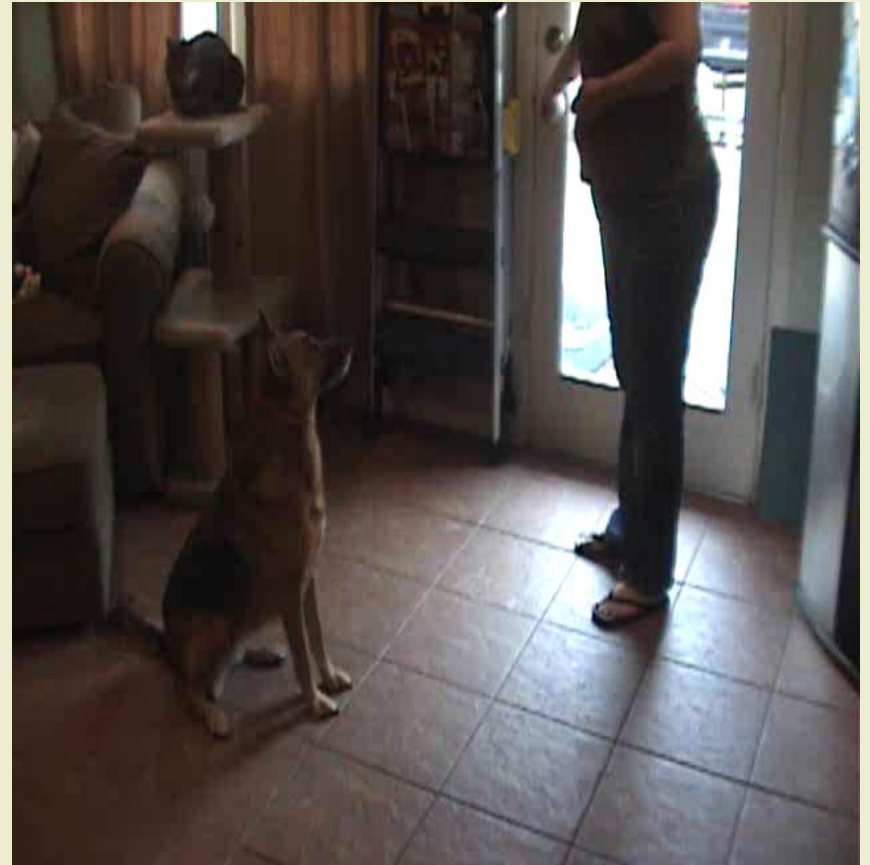
KEYS TO SUCCESS IN A MULTIDOG HOUSEHOLD

- **Focus on owner**
 - **Leadership protocols (Nothing in Life is Free / Deference)**
 - **Dogs take cues for what is expected in a given situation from owner rather than from each other**



HOW TO APPLY THIS TO EVERYDAY LIFE

- **Control over resources**
 - **Going outside**
 - **Coming inside**
 - **Leash**
 - **Food**
 - **Attention**
 - **Toys**



IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

Dominance

- Relationship between individuals that is established by force/aggression and submission
- May need to regularly threaten with aggressive displays or repeatedly use physical force

Leadership

- Influence pet to perform desired behaviors willingly
- Focused on rewarding appropriate behavior and preventing access to or removing the rewards for undesirable behaviors

PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR ALL



- **Enrichment**
 - Toys
 - Play
 - Chews, bones
- **Resting areas**
- **Food and water stations**
- **Exercise**

QUESTIONS?



WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD DOGS ...



WHAT IS AGGRESSION



- **An appropriate or inappropriate challenge, threat or contest resulting in deference or in combat and resolution**

FREE-RANGING DOGS

- Very little “dangerous” physical altercations between free-ranging dogs



WHY DIFFERENT IN HOUSEHOLDS



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- **Barrier frustration**
- **Tight spaces**
- **Dogs don't choose other household members**
- **Breed**

RISK FACTORS

- **Median age of onset –
36 months aggressor
- 56 months victim**
- **Similar breed**
- **Age and location of
acquisition**
- **Same-sex pairs (79%)**
- **Female – 68%**



COMMON TRIGGERS



- **Unstable social relationship**
- **Space**
- **Owner attention**
- **Food**
- **Excitement**
- **Found items**

SUDDEN ONSET OF AGGRESSION

- **Medical problem**
- **Significant change in the home**
 - **Death / absence of person**
 - **Death / absence of another dog**
- **Age of dogs involved**
- **Only appears sudden**

TREATMENT

Management

- **Separation**
- **Physical control**
 - Leash / collar / harness
 - Head halters
- **Muzzle training**
- **Equitable distribution of time and resources**

Modification

- **NILF / Deference**
- **Relaxation**
- **CAT or BAT (with help of qualified behaviorist)**
- **Desensitization / counterconditioning exercises**
- **Basic Training**

WHY PUNISHMENT IS A BAD IDEA

- Difficult to apply properly
- Raises fear and anxiety in each dog
- Teaches dog to distrust owner / handler
- Only SUPRESSESS behavior

■ Remember

Growling is GOOD!

HOW TO RESPOND TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- **Interrupt inappropriate behavior neutrally**
- **Pre-train an interrupter word**
- **Maintain safety for people and dogs at all times**



HOW TO BREAK UP A FIGHT



- **Trash can, baby gate or other physical barrier**
- **“Wheelbarrow” dogs**
- **Blankets**
- **Citronella spray**
- **Soda / water up nose**

MEDICATION



- **Reduce anxiety**
- **Reduce reactivity**
- **Help dogs reach a state where they are better able to learn how to interact more appropriately**
- **Not appropriate for every situation!**

ADJUNCT TREATMENTS

- **DAP**
- **Rescue Remedy**
- **Anxiety Wrap**



WHEN YOU DECIDE NOT TO TREAT

■ Rehoming

- Difficult choice to make
 - Who to rehome
 - Must look at the dogs overall behavior
-
- When rehoming is not an option



BE PROACTIVE RATHER THAN REACTIVE

- **Establish focus on you and other family members early**
- **Have good verbal control over all dogs in home, both individually and in a group setting**
- **Adequate access to resources**
- **Learn to read your dogs and monitor for problems early**

READING CANINE BODY LANGUAGE

- **Eyes**
- **Ear position**
- **Piloerection**
- **Lips / tongue**
- **Tail**



EYES

Whale Eye



Hard Eye



EAR POSITION



PILOERECTION



MOUTH



MOUTH



TAIL POSITION



READING BODY LANGUAGE



READING CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



READING CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



DIFFICULTIES IN READING BICHONS



QUESTIONS?

