

HOW TO INTRODUCE DOGS

If you do have a socially skilled resident dog, here are steps for slowly introducing two dogs in a home:

- **Parallel walking on-leash 20 feet apart in a neutral location (novel to both dogs).** Have both dogs on leash and both handlers armed with a bag of high value small treats. Ensure sure the dogs can see each other but are not provoked by the others presence. Walk in a way that you can double back over the other dogs steps so each dog gets the chance to smell the tracks. Reward with praise and a treat just for looking at the other dog. Try to keep the leashes as loose as possible during the entire introduction. Take your time and make it a positive experience!
- **Pay attention to each dogs body language.** Look for signs that the dogs are curious about each other but not fixated or overly excited. You want to see loose and relaxed body language. If you see prolonged staring, tense movements, stiff high tails, growling and/or other threat signals immediately move further away, calmly redirect the dog to something fun like sitting for a treat and then proceed slower with the introduction. If the body language looks good you can slowly move closer together while continuing to praise and treat each dog for looking at the other.
- **Go at the dog's pace.** Do not rush them or force them to interact. Avoid having them meet head on to quickly. Practice walking behind and in front of each other and side by side with the dogs first on the outside of the handlers working slowly towards the dogs walking beside each other.
- **Keep contact short and sweet.** The first time they come in contact to sniff each other, keep the leashes loose and after just 3 seconds lure each dog away. Praise and reward them with lots of treats. It is not a good idea to let leashed dogs interact for any longer as leashes are restrictive and can add tension, especially if the handlers are nervous.
- **Let them play.** If both dogs seem interested (*wiggling, play bowing, licking and pawing*) and it is a safe location (*fenced area or not near any busy roads*) you can drop the leashes to let the dogs interact without restriction and play. Don't unclip them right away in case you have to quickly separate the dogs. Interrupt the play every few minutes to get the dogs attention for a treat and then allow them to continue. Supervise heavily and if the play becomes too rough, or one of the dogs becomes tense or fearful, separate them for a break. Not all dogs like to play and that is ok.
- **Let the new dog explore the home without the resident dog inside.** Be sure to pick up any resources that could trigger fighting (resource guarding) such as bones, toys, and any food. After the new dog has had a chance to get accustomed let the resident dog back inside.
- **Be sure to give both dogs alone time during this transition.** You can do this using rooms with closed doors (commonly the bathroom, laundry room or kitchen), crates, or baby gates.
- **Separate the dogs when they eat** – even if they seem like best friends from the start. Food is a commonly guarded item and many dogs will still guard food from their friends.
- **Separate the dogs when you leave them alone and can't supervise their interactions.**