



# Greater Androscoggin Humane Society

[www.SavingPetsinMaine.org](http://www.SavingPetsinMaine.org)

## Introducing a New Dog Into Your Home

We recommend that adopters use caution and plan ahead before introducing a new dog to a home with other animals/children. First impressions are important and can have a lasting impact on the relationship between your new dog and other pets. If your current dog (or cats/dogs) have a history of aggression or unease with other dogs/animals you may want to reconsider your choice to take on an additional family member. Age differences can also impact the relationship that animals may have with each other (mainly due to energy level.) The happiness and well-being of your current animal may ultimately impact your ability to bring home another animal.

If you have existing dogs in your home, they consider their home to be their den and that natural territorial element should always be taken into consideration when bringing new animals into it, otherwise it could set you/other animals up for a dangerous situation if these issues are not dealt with proactively.

Tips for the initial introduction:

1. Recruit a second handler/helper for the initial meeting. There should be one person for each dog and choose a neutral place for the introduction. Staff at the shelter can assist you with meet and greets for your own dog, and in some cases may require in for certain dogs prior to adoption.
2. Keep the dogs leashed initially, but try to keep a loose lead to reduce tension. Do not cross leashes. Allow interaction between dogs to progress at its own pace...even if they ignore each other at first this is better than forcing them into an interaction that causes them to become defensive, fearful, or aggressive.
3. Keep initial intro brief. Allow them to touch noses/sniff each other and then separate them. Start human/individual dog play for a few minutes and then allow them another short intro. These breaks can help to prevent overstimulation which can result in escalations of tension and/or frustration.
4. Keep all human voices calm, quiet, and happy. Less human speech/interaction is best.

Behavior Helpline: 207-312-5873 or [Maria@gahumane.org](mailto:Maria@gahumane.org)



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5. Have treats handy and use them as rewards for good behavior during breaks in play...not while the dogs are interacting.
6. Watch the body language of all involved. If you have a multi-dog/animal home, introduce your new dog to each dog/animal/person individually. Inviting, happy, and loose body language is a sign that things are going well...but if stiff, guarded, and defensive body language is seen, separate everyone and return to distracting them with other activities. Wait a little while and briefly repeat interaction again.
7. Continue process until the initial excitement has subsided. When everyone is behaving calmly and they seem to have adjusted to one another, it's time to take everyone home!

After the successful introduction, when you arrive at home take your dogs for a brief walk around the neighborhood together. Once you have entered your home, lead them around the inside together. If this is done calmly, drop leashes and you may also try to let them off-leash but always initially supervise.

During the first few weeks, watch for changes in behavior (guarding etc.) and make sure you've removed any toys or high-valued items belonging to the existing animals. The idea is to remove any potential room for conflict.

For the first few weeks each dog should have a separate area where he/she is confined for sleeping, meals, time-outs, and when there is no one home to supervise. Crating or gating is easiest. After a few weeks, if everyone seems to be getting along well you can start to leave the dogs together without supervision for short periods of time. If all continues well, you may slowly increase the length of time until you feel you can trust them for longer periods. Don't ever leave them unsupervised with food/bone access. Eventually you may be able to feed them in the same area if guarding behaviors aren't present.

During these first few weeks it is also a good idea to introduce new people/things into the equation. Have people come visit, lower value toys brought out during playtime, and other families meet them both.

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If there appears to be any ongoing tension between the dogs keep their interactions together short. Stop any negative interactions with a firm, calm, consistent command, and then separate them for a short period. When they behave well together praise them equally.

If, despite your best efforts, tensions between the dog members of your household persist or escalate, contact an animal behavior expert for advice. Please note that sometimes dogs don't get along due to differences in age (an elderly dog or animal does not always do well with a puppy etc.) or differences in play style, energy level, etc.

In the event that a dog fight should occur, you must stop it calmly and quietly but NEVER reach in for the collar. Try distracting them with a loud noise, spray bottle, throwing a blanket over each of them, or if outside spray them with a hose. Once they are distracted for a moment and you can get ahold of at least one of them, separate until they are calm. This doesn't mean they cannot be introduced again but they need to be kept separate for a bit of time until tensions between them have eased. During that time, reflect on if there was an item of mutual interest, they got too overstimulated in play, etc. that would've caused the tiff.

If the initial introduction process is completed in a calm, positive manner, your new family member will likely bring much joy to all of your human and canine family members. It just takes time & patience but in the long-run the pay-off couldn't be better! Congratulations on your new family member!3