



## Breaking up a dog fight

When welcoming dogs into your service, there are steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of aggression occurring between dogs.

### Preventing dog to dog issues

**Dog owners should be asked to keep their dog on a lead and under control at all times when in shared spaces.**

**Consider the layout of your service and how dogs and their owners will move about.**

Dogs often like to have plenty of space around them and the option to give other dogs a wide berth - especially if they're a little anxious. Where possible, widen spaces for dogs to pass, or consider implementing a one-way system in corridors where dogs might be passing in a very confined space.

**If possible, only one dog should be in a communal area at one time.**

If more than one dog is present, efforts should be made to provide the dogs with space away from each other. This could mean using separate rooms or creating different areas within the room. Visual barriers between dogs may help prevent feelings of anxiety or frustration caused by being able to see one another.

**The use of dog crates/indoor kennels can also be useful in providing dogs with their own safe place in busy environments, away from other dogs.**

It's important that any dog crate/indoor kennel is of a suitable size for the individual dog, and they can comfortably sit up, turn around and lie down. Make sure there is comfortable bedding and water provided for the dog. Dogs should not be left unattended in dog crates/indoor kennels for any extended periods. Our 'Using indoor kennels or crates' handout has more advice on this.

**For further advice or support on any points included in this resource, please contact the Together Through Homelessness team on 020 7833 7611 or by email [tth.endorsement@dogstrust.org.uk](mailto:tth.endorsement@dogstrust.org.uk).**

## **Preventing dog to dog issues**

**Care should always be taken around resources being present (e.g. food, treats, toys and attention) as these can cause conflict between dogs.**

If possible, provide a few water bowls, at a distance from each other, so dogs do not have to share the same one. Keep dogs separated when they're being fed or if they're enjoying a piece of enrichment, such as a puzzle feeder or long-lasting chew.

**It can be helpful to display signage so other service users and dog owners are aware when there is a dog present.**

The Welcoming Dogs team can also provide a 'dog passport' which provide people in the service with important information about the dogs, such as their likes, dislikes, any specific needs they might have, and how others should behave around or interact with them.

**Share/display information on dog behaviour, body language, and how to be safe around dogs (our Welcoming Dogs team can provide this).**

It's important to observe the body language of any dogs in your service. If you spot any signs of fear or anxiety, it's important to respond appropriately, such as giving the dog space, or stopping the interaction. This will help to keep you, the dog, and other people and dogs safe.

**Any incidents or near-misses between dogs (e.g. growling, lunging) should be raised through your accident reporting procedure.**

Steps should be taken to prevent the chance of this happening again or escalating, for example managing the environment or managing the dogs so they do not cross paths.

**Reasonable adjustments should be made where a dog has a history of aggression towards other dogs.**

This could include a separate room provided and seeking advice from the Together Through Homelessness team on any training we may be able to offer your staff.

**If the dog's health or behaviour is causing concern, advice should be sought initially through the Welcoming Dogs team. It may be necessary that veterinary and behaviour professionals are approached for further advice and support.**

## **Breaking up a dog fight**

Witnessing a dog fight can be very distressing, however running straight towards the dogs and grabbing them might risk their behaviour intensifying and put you in danger should their behaviour be redirected towards you.

**Try to remain as calm as possible and ask others present not to crowd or approach with other dogs.** Screaming, shouting or rushing forwards could create or add to panic. Any children or vulnerable adults should be removed from the situation as calmly and quickly as possible.

**Always try to raise the alarm and call for assistance.**

Be aware of your physical limitations and make sure you do not do anything that you feel will put you at risk. Avoid putting any body parts in the way of the dogs as you may get bitten.

**If the dogs have hold of each other, avoid pulling them off as this might make any injuries worse.**

Wait until a moment where they briefly let go, then use their leads to pull them apart and away from each other. Be aware that there's a risk the dogs might redirect onto the people around them.

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**If necessary, create a distraction from a distance, with the aim of interrupting the dogs' behaviour.**

For example, use a nearby object to make a loud noise, such as dropping a metal bowl, slamming a door or banging pans together. As above, when the dogs briefly let go, use their leads to pull them apart.

**Once apart, take the dogs into separate rooms to calm down, and to be checked over when safe to do so.**

## **Following an incident**

**Seek medical and veterinary advice for any injured people and dogs.**

It's important to remember that even if you can't see an obvious physical injury on a dog, there may be an internal injury or puncture wounds that need to be cleaned as soon as possible to avoid infection.

The event may have been a traumatic incident for any people involved, so aside from the treatment of any physical injuries, it might be helpful to consult sources regarding recovery from the emotional impact.

**Consider the events and triggers which led to the situation, and how these might be avoided in the future.**

The incident might affect the way a dog feels about other dogs, for example they may feel more worried in the presence of other dogs going forward, or frustrated if there are other dogs nearby and they're unable to avoid them. The Together Through Homelessness team will be able to offer support around this.

Muzzle training can offer protection from biting, however it is important a dog is taught to wear a muzzle comfortably, while also learning to feel differently about the situation and events which may have resulted in them behaving aggressively. If you feel that this is needed, speak to the Together Through Homelessness team for more information on muzzle training.

**Depending on the specific circumstances, and the severity of the incident, you may wish to report it to the police.**

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