

CITY OF BELMONT

Dog Fights

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Why Do Dogs Fight?

Dogs have always fought over food, the right to mate, the position of a pack and in defence of their young or territory. Individual dogs may vary in their inclination to fight because of their breeding, socialisation, experience and training.

Socialisation

Dogs that have been well socialised with other dogs from an early age are less likely to fight.

Breeding

Dogs of any breed or cross breed, may be involved in dog fights, particularly if they have not been properly socialised with other dogs. Some breeds or individual dogs may be more likely to fight as they have been selected for their fighting or guarding abilities. When buying a puppy, choose the breed carefully. Ask to see the parents of the pup to see what their temperaments are like.

Protectiveness

Fights between dogs may occur when one of the dogs is protecting its territory, its owner or itself. A dog allowed to wander onto the road will usually claim its owners front verge and the road as its own and may attack other dogs passing by.

Training

Obedience training alone will not prevent a dog from fighting, but will make it easier for the owner to control the dog to prevent a fight or stop a fight once it has started.

Leashes

Preventing contact between unfamiliar dogs is one of the main reasons why dogs must be on a leash in public. What may happen when two dogs meet cannot always be predicted. A normally friendly dog may take a particular dislike to another dog and start a fight.

Prey Catching

A smaller dog may be attacked and killed by a larger dog when its movements or sounds are mistaken for prey.

Pecking Order

It is normal for dogs to form a "pecking order". Fighting will continue to occur if people interfere with this order by trying to treat the dogs as equal. When two dogs live together, particularly if they are the same sex, it is important to reinforce the "top" dog's position.

Sex

Castration may reduce fighting in male dogs. Female dogs may also be aggressive towards each other, but male/female fights are less common. If purchasing two dogs, a person should obtain one of each sex and have them sterilised if they are not going to be used for breeding.

When fighting is due to a dog being frightened or protective, or if a dog has been trained to fight, sterilisation will have no effect.

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Preventing a Dog Fight

Many dog fights occur when out in public places. Having dogs on leashes will help you to be able to separate dogs if they become aggressive. However, your dog may be approached by another dog off its leash.

If your dog is on the leash and you are approached by another dog which is off the leash, you should leave the area by backing slowly away. If the threatening dog follows, try telling it to "stay" or "sit".

Small dogs may be picked up and carried as the owner backs slowly away from the other dog.

Do Not:

- scream and shout
- turn around and run away
- move forward or allow your dog to rush forward
- strike out or kick at the other dog

These actions are only likely to make the other dog more aggressive.

Understanding dog body language can help you to realise when your dog or another dog is being aggressive BEFORE a fight starts. Signs of aggression include:

- Slow and deliberate movements when approaching other people or dogs
- A stiff legged walk and "tall" posture
- Ears erect and hairs on the back and neck raised
- Tail horizontal or upright (can be wagging!)
- A direct stare
- Lifting of the leg and urination
- Growling, snarling or curling of the upper lip.

Remember that nervous dogs may become aggressive if they feel threatened or cornered.

Obedience training will help you to be able to control your dog's behaviour, whether it is on or off the leash and prevent a fight from starting.

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