



Pictures: Alex Cearns, Hounds tooth Studio,  
hounds tooth studio.com.au

**Having more than one dog in the family home can be a rewarding experience, but combining the wrong breeds can pose dangers**

**M**ANY people live with several dogs in the family without any issues, but there are times when rivalry among the dogs can occur.

Much of it is avoidable. You can pre-empt potential bad behaviour by focusing on what you want your dogs to do. This means understanding the motives for the aggression, including medical and genetic causes.

Your dog may not share your enthusiasm when it comes to introducing another canine to the household. Like humans, dogs have their preferences. Not all dogs like the idea of sharing their home with another pooch. Some will only tolerate specific breeds and genders. Others appear to enjoy meeting canine friends, until a new dog is brought into their home to stay. Then there are the non-discriminatory ones that enjoy the company of just about any dog they meet.

**If your multi-dog household is experiencing challenges, these suggestions can help:**

- \* **De-emphasise status** It is important to reinforce patient and polite behaviour – not by supporting one dog over the other, but rewarding displays of socially compatible behaviour. Examples of this can include the dogs ignoring each other in different contexts, sharing attention and remaining non-reactive.
- \* **Teach your dogs self-control** Your dogs should not expect attention on demand. Attention-seeking dogs are often unwilling to share you with anyone else. Self-control is most important in potential trigger scenarios, such as interaction with visitors, taking treats and possession of a toy or other highly valued item.
- \* **Clear communication** Tell the “problem” dog that you’re pleased when it’s patient, tolerant and even relaxed when the other dog is in close proximity, and vice versa. Since competition for

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