

## Have you Adopted a Dog during the Pandemic?

When you have a dog or two, it can seem easy to say “Sure, I’ll take on another.” But there’s a lot to consider when you have multiple dogs in the household. From middle-child issues to problem behaviors escalating, one additional dog can mean a multitude of additional issues.

First to be clear, the relationship you have with a dog when you only have one dog, is the strongest relationship you’ll have. As soon as you add another dog your attention, resources, everything is watered down. It’s inevitable and can be handled but it takes effort and focus.

Start by looking at the effects on the other dogs in the household. So often the older dog didn’t ask for a little brother or sister but yet they’re expected to ‘teach them the ropes.’ Be sure to give an older dog plenty of space from any new dogs and pay attention to ensure they aren’t having to escalate their responses to get their point across. Also one-on-one time with you is key after a new sibling comes into the family. Bring the older dog for short trips and fun outings so their life is even better since the new pup.

If you’re taking on a third (or more) dog, then you have dogs that have fallen into the realm of middlechild; they were the baby and chances are their training was still in process when the new, more exciting pup was brought on board. Watch for attention-seeking behaviors from these guys and be sure to give them focused time to keep your relationship strong.

The new pup is the star of the show but is going to be throwing lots of different behaviors out to see what’s acceptable and what’s not. Don’t let them be rude to any other pets in the house or push them out of the way. And be sure to actually train them! Other dogs in the household can show them the routine and acceptable behavior but they don’t teach them to Stay or walk politely on leash.

If you have a pack of dogs (3 or more) than you actually have one more than you think. For example, if you have 3 dogs, you actually have 4. The reason being is that you have to account for the pack dynamic. You talk and direct each dog individually but you also talk to the pack as a whole, and that’s a different dynamic than one-on-one with you. Be sure you practice behaviors with each of your dog’s then with your pups together so their response is the same either way.

Having a multi-dog household can be fun and rewarding but it does take effort. If things seem off, take some time with each dog individually. I’ve found that if I focus – really focus – on a dog for 3-5 minutes daily, our relationship improves and so does their response rate.

**Marcy Eckhardt** is the director of **pranaDOGS Behavior & Rehab Center** and Canine Behavior Coach at the La Plata County Humane Society.  
**[pranadogs.org](http://pranadogs.org)**