

Dog meets Dog

As farm dogs English Shepherds were encouraged to be less than friendly with stray dogs that wandered on to the property. Stray dogs might chase the stock or hurt the children, stray dogs were not to be trusted. Many English Shepherds still feel this way, especially when they are at home. But most are actually not very aggressive and away from home are often quite friendly with every dog they meet.

Still, it's a good idea to socialize your English Shepherd to other dogs. Start when he's young and do it often. Dogs need to play, dogs need to hang out with other dogs. Find a dog park or a puppy playgroup near you. Or get together with friends who have dogs and sit back and relax while your "kids" have fun. Remember that dogs can play quite roughly with each other and make a lot of noise. Often what sounds like a nasty dog fight is just some serious good fun. And even when they do have a disagreement, dogs can usually sort it out pretty quickly.

Don't worry if your English Shepherd doesn't seem interested in playing with other dogs at first. Many herding breed dogs really only play with other herding breed dogs or with dogs they've gotten to know well. Your dog is having a good time and learning things even if it doesn't appear that active "playing" is happening. It is best if you can stick around where your dog can check in on and with you easily. Most dogs will quickly get the hang of being social with other canines.

However, some dogs need more practice than others. Many rescue dogs missed this early, important socialization. And some dogs just don't naturally play well with others. So here are some tips to help you help your dog. (by Margaret Proctor)

- Start with a diplomat, a friendly, non-threatening, confident dog.
- Take both dogs to a neutral area, one that neither feels they have to defend, preferably a fenced area that is big enough to RUN in.
- Try to position yourself and the other owner so that your dogs don't feel they have to defend you. (ex. Don't stand with the other dog between you and your dog)
- Don't pet the other dog. Don't have any toys or food around. You don't want to encourage jealousy.
- Don't speak sharply to either dog. As soon as your dog thinks you are displeased with the other dog he will feel it is his job to get involved. He might not interpret correctly which dog is being corrected so keep the tension out of your body and voice.
- It is very important not to make too big a deal about this. If you are worried your dog will be too. Your dog reacts to your voice, body language, etc. Don't over-react. Fake it if necessary.
- Turn both dogs loose. They are less afraid when they feel free to run if necessary. The leash feels confining, not comforting to the dog.
- Ignore both dogs. Don't interfere unless it is CLEAR the dogs won't work it out.