

## GREYHOUND AND OTHER DOGS

### GUIDELINES FOR INTRODUCING OTHER DOGS:

Most retired racing greyhounds have not met a variety of different breeds of dogs during their critical developmental period as puppies under 4 months of age. Because of this it is not uncommon for them to be fearful, over excited, have poor greeting manners, or to display predatory behaviour when meeting unfamiliar dogs.

Like people, dogs are individuals, and while some dogs are 'disco dogs' and want to party and hang out with every dog they meet, others are 'library dogs' and would rather catch up with a few close friends or hang out with their family. This is important to recognise, because even though you might enjoy socialising at the dog park, your hound might prefer to be anywhere else! Most greyhounds, in part due to their background living exclusively with their own breed, are 'library dogs'.

Remember to take your time, gradual positive exposure to different dogs, even when the dogs do not greet, will be far more beneficial, rather than rushed over-excited greetings. There is no requirement that your greyhound needs to have off lead play time with other breeds of dog, they can have an enriched life without this.

When introducing dogs, it is important to manage arousal levels (alertness), both dogs should be calm to ensure a higher likelihood of a successful introduction. Do not let highly aroused dogs meet as this can lead to a fight.

**As a safety precaution we always recommend the use of a securely fitted plastic basket muzzle when introducing unfamiliar dogs or playing off lead.**

### PARALLEL WALK

This step is to allow the dogs the opportunity to gather information about each other from a distance, but they are **not** meeting each other. Do this when bringing a new dog in to the home

You will need two adults for this step. Keep the existing dog inside where they cannot see the greyhound, so they don't bark. Allow the greyhound to acclimate to the new environment by going a short, calm, and uneventful on lead walk to sniff around the garden or driveway. Bring the existing dog out on lead and walk at a distance from the greyhound, but remember the dogs are not meeting on lead yet. Allow them to sniff the locations each other have been before walking inside separately and putting the greyhound in their crate, indoor playpen, or baby-gated room.

### MEETING THROUGH A BARRIER FIRST

We particularly recommend following this step after a parallel walk for dogs who are going to be living together or spending time together frequently as it has a higher chance of facilitating a successful interaction

Set them up for success by having the dogs coexist on opposite sides of a barrier e.g., a fence, play pen fencing, or baby gate. Try and avoid areas that are confined, instead choose an area that both dogs can move about freely. This gives both dogs plenty of time to gather information from each other safely. By the time the dogs are ready to interact without the barrier, the novelty will have worn off and their arousal levels (alertness) will be lower. Check out our *Multi-Dog Household* resource for more information if you are adding another canine to the family.

### MEETING ON LEAD

After doing a parallel walk, keep the lead loose and allow the dogs to move as freely as you can, let them approach and sniff, but keep the initial interaction short (3-5 seconds) before calling both dogs away and continuing to walk on. Allow another approach and sniff, then repeat if you think you need to. If one or both dogs are reacting to the other (pulling on the lead, barking, lunging), set the distance between you that allows both dogs to walk calmly without reacting undesirably. This might be a couple of meters apart, or on opposite sides of the road to start with. Gradually decrease the distance between the dogs, ensuring at every step the dogs are relatively calm and relaxed.

If you are comfortable with the body language, and you are in a safe and secure area without other dogs, you may choose to drop one or both of the leads to give the dogs more freedom, but keep one or both on a longline if you are in doubt. Do not allow the dogs to play while you are still holding the lead as this can lead to conflict due to fear or

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frustration. You can remove the leads when you are comfortable with the body language between both dogs (see the description of what to look for below).

Monitor the situation, if one of the dogs becomes over aroused or too excited you can conduct a simple consent test. Hold the more excited dog and if the calmer dog approaches, let them keep playing, if not, it is time for a break.

### **WHAT ABOUT DOG PARKS?**

We advise you to avoid dog parks, only a small percentage of dogs are suited to this environment and enjoy it. It's more likely to cause unnecessary stress for your greyhound and is highly unlikely to help them to learn appropriate canine social skills. Try and seek out friends or family with dogs you can introduce your hound to in a controlled environment.

## BODY LANGUAGE TO LOOK OUT FOR AND WHAT IT MEANS

### *Appropriate interactions:*

#### Signs of interest:

- Soft eyes, slow blinking
- Ears relaxed/neutral position
- Sniff previous location where the other dog was
- Sniffing or licking the other dogs urine
- Air scenting
- Sniffing the rear/groin area of the other dog
- Play bow

**Polite cut off signals:** when two dogs meet, cut off signals are behaviours that are requests for additional space or a reduction in stress levels of the meeting. These are used to avoid conflict. Take things slowly and look for signs of interest or if this escalates to signs of stress.

- Passing glances
- Sniffing the ground
- Turning body away with loose spine
- Walking away
- Scratching
- Lip or nose lick
- Yawning
- A full body shake off

#### Appropriate play behaviour:

- Bouts of play with pauses
- Self-handicapping (role reversing) though some pairs or groups of dogs will have agreed upon “roles” which they tend to stick to
- Listening and responding appropriately if the other dog tells them “too much” i.e. one dog yelps, other dog should back off
- Loose, fluid body movements
- Action intersected by play signals e.g. huffing, sneezing, play bow, pause with play face (this is a ‘soft’ expression with a lack of fixed tension in the face)
- Intensity ebbs and flows

**Signs of stress:** if your dog is stressed take a break, slow down, or stop any introductions for the day:

- Yawning
- Lip or nose licks
- Excessive ‘dry’ panting
- Frantic sniffing and scanning the environment
- Avoiding the other dog, turning head away, walking away
- Crouched posture, pinned ears, tucked tail
- Dandruff, shedding fur
- Barking or lunging

### Inappropriate interactions:

It is normal and acceptable for dogs to have minor squabbles, however if a dog is repeatedly demonstrating inappropriate behaviours or if the situation is escalating you must intervene.

It is also important to watch for the subtler signs that a dog is feeling uncomfortable or overwhelmed by the situation.

#### Freeze, stiff body, hard eye contact:

A subtle signal which can be easy to miss. This is a direct warning to the other dog to give them space. It will generally be followed by a lip lift and/or growl and snap if it is not observed by the other dog and can escalate quickly.

In this situation, call the other dog away. The dog who had frozen should relax and will likely “shake it off” and continue as normal.

#### Lip curl:

Another clear warning signal that the dog does not wish to engage. If a dog is pushed at this point it is generally followed by a growl and/or snap.

If the other dog is not listening to this signal call them away and engage the dog with you. Do not punish the dog for lip raising as this is a valuable warning.

#### Signs of predation can include:

- Intense, fixed staring unable to take their eyes off the “prey”
- Licking lips, salivating, teeth chattering
- Neck arched, stiff tall stance, tail up
- Stalking
- High pitched whining/squeaking
- Pawing at the “prey” or bunting with their muzzle
- Barking if restricted from reaching the “prey”

