



LITTERMATE SYNDROME

WHAT IS LITTERMATE SYNDROME (LS)?

Littermate Syndrome is a term used to describe the behavioral effects commonly associated with owning or raising two dogs from the same litter.

Common issues related to LS include:

- One pup is overly confident, impulsive, and rude, whereas the other is hesitant, anxious, or fearful
- Dogs become co-dependent from one another and have separation issues (hyper attachment)
- Dogs may not seek out owner for play, attention, or affection as needs are met by other dog
- Sibling rivalry issues due to lack of guidance, boundaries, or

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Dogs will always select their own species over humans, as it is what is most familiar to them. Puppies with limited experiences have to *learn* to choose human interaction over other canines, as social engagement with their own species is *highly rewarding*.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT LS?

- Crate dogs separately (maybe even in separate locations of the house)
- Work dogs individually and together
- Socialize dogs separately to ensure individual needs are met (outgoing dogs work on focus and control, hesitant pups work on confidence and curiosity)
- Focus a lot on engagement and reward offered behavior
- Routinely assess your dog's development and behavioral needs (check in weekly!)

COMMANDS AND SKILLS TO HELP WITH LS:

- Work on name recognition separately (individual names) and together (group name)
-
- What is your command to demand focus from all dogs? _____
- Sit/Stay (especially for leashes and feedings!)
- Loose Lead Walking (two is harder than one!)
- Recall (coming when called)
- Wait (to control thresholds: crate, kitchen, doors, car, stairs, etc)
- Place (for when dogs need to learn to wait their turn, and decompress)
- Leave-it (to prevent guarding issues, coveting toys, bothering the other dog while relaxing)
- "That's Enough" (command to redirect dogs when play is out of hand, great for 'time outs'!)

It takes an average of 18 months to lay the foundation for your pup to be set up for life. That means diligent management, planning your training lessons, and budgeting extra time to implement exercises into your daily routine.

To make things easier - ditch the bowl and feed all meals in either pacifying toys (hollow rubber) or food dispensing toys (wobbler, tug-a-jug, buster cube, etc).

⚠ Littermate syndrome can occur not just in siblings, but whenever dogs are within 6-12 months of one another.

⚠ Having two dogs of similar age is exponentially more work, time, and commitment, than raising just one!

⚠ Until adulthood, each dog's needs may vary depending on their genetics, experiences, and developmental stage!