

## Breaking Up a Dog Fight

The best way to deal with fights is to commit to prevention, what we often refer to as **Dog Management**. But when (not if), something slips past you and a scuffle breaks out, it can help to shout a VERY loud and convincing "NO!"

If that does not work, your next best move may be the hardest to accomplish: **Take a deep breath and count to five**, pay attention and observe what is happening. This gives you time to think about your options rather than react impulsively.

**Some fights can be stopped quickly by grabbing the dogs' back legs and pulling them apart, some will end with the use of the hose if you are in the backyard, in some cases you can throw a blanket over one of the dogs to surprise them into stopping.**

**Read through the following tips as you would any safety plan for you and your family. Discuss with all members of the household and talk about it:**

- Remain as calm as possible, so you can think in an orderly manner, and so as not to excite the dogs more with your frantic behavior.
- Call for help if someone is nearby. Say something like, "I need help with a dog fight in [specific area]." If you remember nothing else, remember to STAY CALM
- Do NOT grab the dogs' collars or put your hands anywhere near their mouths to try to separate them. You are most likely to get bitten that way, and your skin is usually a lot thinner than a dog's skin.
- Do NOT put your face near the dog during a fight or anytime you do not know that dog
- STOP, look around and stop your tunnel vision. When you do not stop and look around you will follow your instincts and grab the dogs which could result in a bite.
- While you stop, look around and see what is readily available for an auditory interrupter or if there is something else you can use to break up the fight rather than your hands.
- Initially, try an auditory interrupt, that is, a startling noise. For example, clap your hands together loudly, whistle at full volume, clang a metal bowl against the fence or two bowls together, sound an air horn or mugging alarm, anything that works to surprise the dogs and interrupt the fight.
- If the auditory interrupt is ineffective, douse one or both dogs with water from a bucket or hose or spray Direct Stop (citronella spray) near the dogs' noses. Another option is to place a chair or other large object between the fighting dogs.

- If you have a second person, you can have each person place arms or a leash under a dog's inguinal region (area where the rear legs meet the belly), wait for the dogs to loosen their grip, and then pull dogs away. It is important that you DO NOT pull dogs away if one or both has a tight grip on the other dog, as that could cause much more damage (in terms of tears and rips) than waiting for the dogs to release. Also, the legs and stomach area can be sensitive on a dog. Use caution if grabbing this area.
- As soon as the fight is interrupted, immediately separate the dogs, both physically and visually, to prevent them from starting the fight again. Each dog needs time for their adrenaline level to lower. Next, check each dog for injuries which may need veterinarian attention. If you suspect injuries, or after an intense fight, see a veterinarian, who will examine each dog for hidden wounds and internal damage. Keep in mind the dog still has left over adrenaline as well as possible pain, be very careful when handling or examining for injuries.
- Finally, witnessing and breaking up a dog fight can be a shocking, traumatic experience for people, so make time for you to unwind. Go to a quiet place, sit down, and breathe deeply to relax. This is very important; dogs may react differently to you if you are not yourself due to stress.
- If you are injured during a dog fight, calmly seek medical attention

**LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE:** If your dogs have a spat, do not get down on yourself. Instead, use it as a learning experience to help prevent a repeat performance. Ask yourself:

- What contributed to the scuffle?
- what little signs should have told me that I needed to intervene earlier?
- Have my dogs been getting enough exercise?
- Is my female in heat? (Another good reason to spay and neuter; less dog-dog conflict!)
- Am I spoiling one of the dogs and setting up a grudge?
- Did somebody raise the stakes during a wrestle session?
- Did the new toy make somebody too possessive?

By understanding what might have caused a problem, you can change the way you do things with the dogs and nip most issues in the bud before they escalate. If you just are not sure of what might have contributed, talk with a trainer to see if they can shed some light.

## When Dogs Fight

It is fine to scold your dog(s) just after a scuffle and let them know that their behavior was unacceptable and it's probably a good idea to separate for a bit – but soon after, try to find an opportunity to end the moment on a positive note with the dog doing something that you ask of them. Most huskies can enjoy dog friends and avoid conflict

with the help of your guidance and supervision. After an argument, it is time for more structure in the home to remind your dogs who calls the shots.

What dogs do when you are not around may be a different story though. We recommend separating pets from each other when you are not there to manage their interactions, especially when a new pet has joined the household.