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Problems Associated With Adopting Two Puppies at the Same Time

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Why experts warn against adopting two puppies at the same time - and what you can do for your dogs if you did not heed the warning.

By Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

[Updated September 1, 2016]

There's no denying it: a new puppy is one of the world's most wonderful things. It's a cold, hard heart that doesn't get all mushy over puppy breath, soft pink puppy pads, and the fun of helping a baby dog discover his new world. So, if one puppy is wonderful, two puppies must be twice as wonderful, right? Well, not usually.

Most training professionals strongly recommend against adopting two pups at the same time. The biggest challenge of adopting puppy pairs is their tendency to bond very closely with each other, often to the exclusion of a meaningful relationship with their humans. They can become inseparable. Also, owners often underestimate the time commitment required to properly care for and train two puppies; as a result the pups often end up untrained and undersocialized.

Don't Get Two Puppies at Once!

I'm the last person on earth to argue against getting a second dog, or even a third; my husband and I have five. However, there are very good reasons to think long and hard about not getting two puppies at once, whether they are siblings or not.

While the majority of new puppy owners seem to recognize that one puppy is enough of a responsibility for them, a certain number fall prey to one of a few common arguments about why two puppies might be better than one. I can rebut every one of them!

Let's take a look at the most common reasons that people say they want to adopt two puppies at the same time – and why they shouldn't be considered.

Two-pup rationale #1: "I want to get two puppies so they will have someone to play with while I'm gone all day at work."

It's a good thing to recognize that your pup could use companionship during the day. However, if you think one puppy can get into trouble when you're not there, just think what kinds of mischief two pups can cook up when left to their own devices. Better solutions might include:

- Adopt your new pup at a time when someone in your family can take a week (or several) off work to stay home and help the puppy adjust gradually to being left alone. A couple of weeks vacation time? Kids home for the summer? Just be sure to use the time wisely, so your pup can learn to happily accept being alone when it's time to go back to work or school.
- Find a friend, neighbor, or relative who is home much of the time and who is willing to provide daycare for your pup – and experience the joys of having a puppy to play with during the day, without the long-term responsibilities and costs of having a dog for 15-plus years.
- Ask your vet if she has another client with a similar-age puppy, and see if the two of you can mingle your pups at one of your puppy-proofed homes for puppy daycare, and send the second baby dog back home after work. Note the emphasis on "puppy-proofed." Two pups can still get into a heap of trouble, even if one of them isn't yours.

Two-pup rationale #2: "I have two children and they each want their own puppy."

What a sweet idea. Just say no. Since when do the kids get to make the rules? Seriously, most families I know have enough trouble getting their kids to fulfill their promise to feed, walk, and clean up after one family dog. Mom ends up doing most of it anyway. So now Mom gets to do double-puppy-duty? If there's a compelling reason for them each to have a dog, consider adopting one puppy now, and an adult dog from a shelter or rescue group. Even then, I'd adopt one first and give her at least a month to settle in, if not longer, before adopting the second.

If you must adopt two puppies at the same time for the kids, see the second half of this article.

Two-pup rationale #3: "We want to have two dogs eventually anyway, so we might as well get them at the same time so they can grow up together as best friends."

Well, that's what you might well get! When you raise two puppies together they usually do grow up to be inseparable best friends, often to the detriment of the dog-human relationship. Inevitably they spend far more time together than they do individually with you, with a likely result that they become very tightly bonded to each other and you are only secondary in their lives. Many owners of adopted-at-the-same-time puppies ultimately find themselves disappointed in their relationships with their dogs, even when they are committed to keeping them for life.

This super-bonding also causes tremendous stress (and stress-related behavior problems) on those occasions when the dogs do have to be separated – and sooner or later, something will come up that requires them to be separated: one goes to training class and the other doesn't, you want to walk one but not both, or a health-related problem requires one to be hospitalized or otherwise kept separate.

Two-pup rationale #4: "A second puppy will play with the first and keep her occupied when I'm too busy to spend time with her."

Nice thought, but here's a heads-up. If you're too busy to give one puppy the time she needs, you're definitely too busy for two puppies!

There are great interactive dog toys on the market that can help occupy your pup when you can't play with her – and don't think that either another puppy or a pen full of toys can substitute for social time with you. Puppies do take time, and it's important you give that some serious thought before adding a baby dog to the family. It's fine to give her playmate-time via arranged play dates with a friend's healthy and compatible puppy, but don't think adopting a second pup is an acceptable substitute for your own interaction with your puppy.

Two-pup rationale #5: "If we adopt a second puppy, that's one fewer that might be euthanized."

I won't argue with this, except to say that in many shelters around the country today, puppies aren't the problem. Of course there are exceptions, but I'd say the majority of shelters in the United States now have no problems placing most if not all the puppies they get. It's the adult dogs who are most likely to die because of homelessness. If you really want to save a life, adopt a grown-up dog instead of a puppy, or at least adopt your puppy now, and come back for an adult dog in a few months.

Two-pup rationale #6: "The breeder we are buying our puppy from thinks it's best if we take two."

If you're buying from a breeder who encourages you to purchase two puppies at once, run away fast. A truly responsible breeder will, in most cases, refuse to sell two puppies to one home, except on the rare occasion that a prospective buyer can prove she has the skill, knowledge, time, ability, and monetary resources to provide an excellent environment for two pups at once. Someone who tries to push two puppies on a buyer isn't a very responsible breeder, and isn't doing her puppies, or the new owner, any favors.

What to Do If You Adopt Two

Perhaps you've already adopted two puppies and are ruefully regretting your error. Or maybe you don't regret it, but you realize you've taken on far more of a responsibility than you realized. Perhaps you're determined to go ahead and do it anyway, despite my advice above. If you do take the bait and find yourself in double trouble, there are things you can do to minimize problems and maximize your success as the owner of a puppy pair:

- 1. Crate them separately.** Your pups are going to have plenty of together time; they don't need to sleep together too. You can certainly leave them together in their puppy-proofed space when you're gone all day, but they should be crated separately at night. You can crate them near each other, but this is the perfect time to start habituating them to not always being in close contact with their sibling. (See "Crating Woes," Whole Dog Journal May 2005.) When they are comfortable in their crates close to each other, you can gradually increase distance between crates until they can be crated out of sight of each other, perhaps even in another room.

You can also do the “separate crating” thing cold turkey. If your children are old enough to be responsible for taking their pups out in the middle of the night, start from day one with a pup crated in each kid’s room.

In any case, the puppies’ separate crates should be in someone’s bedroom. This is vitally important so someone hears them when they wake at night and have to go out. The pups also benefit from the eight hours of close contact with you, even though you’re all sleeping. And by the way, you can bet if one puppy wakes up to go out, the other puppy in her nearby crate will wake up, too.

2. Train them separately. Your training programs will be much more successful if you take the time to work with your pups individually. If you are using clicker training (and I hope you are!), you’ll probably find that it’s confusing and difficult to try to click and reward one pup for doing a desired behavior when the other pup is doing an unwanted behavior. When this happens, both pups think they got clicked, which means you’re reinforcing the unwanted behavior as well as the desired one. Oops! Not to mention that it’s much more difficult to get and keep any semblance of attention from either puppy if the other is present as a distraction.

Training time is a perfect opportunity to give your pups a positive association with being separated. One gets to play (train) with you and get attention, clicks, and yummy treats, while the other gets to hang out in her crate in another room, preferably far enough away she can’t hear you clicking, and empty her deliciously stuffed Kong.

If there’s a second trainer in your family, that person can work with the second pup in another room at the same time. Eventually you can each work with them at the same time in the same room, and sometime in the future one person can have fun working with them both at the same time. But that’s down the road somewhere, after they’ve both learned their good manners lessons very well.

3. Play with them separately. It’s common in puppy pairs for one pup to be more assertive than the other, and take the lead in puppy activities. It’s fine to play with them together some of the time, and it’s also important to play with them separately, so the more assertive pup doesn’t always get to make the rules for the other.

For example, if you always play “fetch” with the two together, you’re likely to see that one pup repeatedly gets the toy and brings it back, while the other runs happily along behind. If you watch closely, you may even see the more assertive one do a little body language warning if the other tries to get the toy – a hard stare and stiffened body, perhaps. The less assertive one defers to her sibling by letting go of the toy and looking away. That’s a fine and normal puppy interaction, but it can suppress the “softer” pup’s retrieving behavior. Unless you make the effort to give her positive reinforcement for fetching toys when you play with her alone, you might find it difficult to get her to retrieve later on in her training.

4. Walk and socialize them separately. Just as with your training sessions, you’ll need to walk one pup while leaving the other behind with something wonderful, or while someone else walks the other one in the opposite direction around the block. Walking them together with different handlers doesn’t work; the less confident pup will come to rely on the presence of the more confident one to be brave in the real world. Then, when the more confident one isn’t there, the shyer pup is more likely to be fearful. All the activities you would normally do with one pup, you need to do with each pup individually.

Signing up for puppy training class? Set aside two nights, not one, and take them to separate classes. Going to the groomer? It’s two trips, not one. Time for that next set of puppy shots? Make two appointments, not one. Oh okay, I’ll give you a break – it doesn’t have to be every time, but they should go somewhere by

themselves at least as often as they go together.

So, are you getting the idea of the “separate but equal” program? Everything you would do with one puppy you need to do with each puppy separately. This is to be sure they’re both getting the attention, training, and socialization experiences they need, without the interference of the other pup, and so they’re not dependent on the presence of other pup. Of course you can also do things with them together, but you must be sure they are completely relaxed and comfortable about being apart.

For super-bonded dogs, separation becomes a world-class crisis, fraught with life-threatening behaviors such as anorexia (refusal to eat in the other’s absence), separation anxiety (barking, destructive behavior, relentless pacing, and howling), and other stress-related behaviors, including aggression.

Inevitably, at some time in their lives super-bonded dogs will have to be separated. One will get sick, or need surgery, when the other doesn’t. Most of the time, one will die before the other. I know of cases where the surviving dog of a super-bonded pair has had to be euthanized after the partner died, as he was too stressed by himself to be able to function. This is not a situation any loving dog owner wants to face.

Other Factors Involved in Adopting Two Puppies

Behavioral considerations are the reason that most trainers recommend against adopting two puppies at once. But there are other reasons that have nothing to do with the dogs’ behavior.

1. Cost. Not surprisingly, it costs twice as much for routine feeding and care for two puppies as it does for one. But don’t forget the catastrophic care costs! If one pup contracts a deadly disease such as parvovirus, you’re on your way to the emergency clinic with two pups, not one. Sure, if one gets injured the other’s not likely to have sympathy injuries, but with two pups the chances of one getting injured in some manner double.

2. Clean up. Let’s not forget puppy pee and poo. One pup produces more than enough waste for any sane human to deal with, and with two pups you naturally double the production.

If that isn’t enough, consider this: You leave your pups in an exercise pen when you’re not home. One pup is likely to learn to eliminate in a corner of the pen reasonably quickly, and will hopefully avoid tromping through it. Two puppies may select two different corners of the pen as designated bathroom spots, which doubles the chances of poop tromping. On top of that, if the two pups get to wrestling, as pups do, there’s a much greater likelihood of them rolling around in poo than there is if one pup is playing by herself.

Picture yourself coming home from a long, hard day at work, tired, looking forward to a little loving puppy cuddling, to find a pair of poo-covered pups in a pen plastered with the stuff from one side to the other. I’m just sayin’ . . .

3. Housetraining. Of course, when you’re home, the puppies come out of the pen to be with you. We normally recommend the umbilical cord approach to housetraining: at first keeping your pup on a leash or tether, or with you, under your eagle eye, all the time, and going out to the designated potty spot every hour on the hour.

Now you’re tied to two puppies who want to wrestle with each other under your feet – or one’s tied to you and one to another family member. As the pups mature you lengthen the time between potty breaks and start relaxing supervision, when the pups demonstrate their ability to “hold it.”

Oops! There's a puddle. Which pup did it? Oh look, there's a wee puppy pile of poo under the dining room table. Oh no! I see teeth marks on the corner of the antique loveseat! If you have one puppy and you're having a persistent problem, you clearly know who needs more supervision, or a quick trip to the vet to rule out a possible medical issue. With two pups, you have to increase management and supervision on both of them, and may never know for sure which one is having accidents. Or maybe it's both!

4. Gender. Some people say if you're going to have two puppies, get a boy and a girl. Others say get two boys. Some might specifically warn against getting two girls, stating that two female adult dogs in the same family will fight. Others will tell you they've had two girl dogs at the same time, no problem.

Here's my take: Plenty of same-sex puppy pairs get along just fine throughout their lives. Plenty of mixed-sex pairs do the same. There are same sex pairs that end up with conflicts, and there are mixed-sex pairs that end up fighting with each other (despite super-bonding). It does seem to be true (and there are some studies that indicate) that intra-pack conflicts involving two females tend to be more intense than intra-pack issues between two males, or opposite sex pairs. That doesn't mean there will be conflict if you adopt two girl puppies, only that if there is, it may be more difficult to resolve than differences of opinions between two boys, or a boy and a girl.

Think About It

Is the extra fun of having two puppies at one time worth all the extra time, energy, cost, and headaches? I'm warning you not to do it. I'm recommending you adopt one now, and another in six months to a year, when the first has bonded with you, and at least completed her basic good manners training.

But if you decide to do it anyway, and are ready to do all it takes to make it work, then you have my sincere blessings and best wishes. But please, be honest and realistic about whether you and your other human family members really have the resources and commitment to give both pups what they need to ensure their lifelong loving home with you. Go find your two wonderful puppies and have an absolutely great life with them.

Pat Miller, CPDT, is Whole Dog Journal's Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center.

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Comments (33)

I took offense to this article because obviously the writer is not a breeder and most of the time conclude opinions based on hearsay and limited experience in raising full pack dogs. Let me give you the reasons why good breeders recommend adopting two litters:

1) To eliminate separation anxiety towards you (the human). When the dog has no one to interact with but you, the dog would cry and bark all day and all night when you are separated from it. There are cases where owners cut their vocal chords to stop them from barking. There are issues when neighbors petition to get you vacated because of the dog's constant barking when

you are not home.

2) To eliminate social anxiety especially towards other dogs and other people. Yes, I socialized dogs will be fearful and odd when other dogs/humans approach them. But 2 littermates are enough to socialize one another and most cases they do not exhibit fear or aggression towards others. Yes, some very few dogs can have a territorial behavior but if they do exhibit this, they will be territorial to you if they are raised without his littermates.

PS. I don't recommend adopting 2 dogs from different litters because there are chances that they might not be compatible. Also if one dog is adopted first, the dog may already form a separation anxiety and territorial behavior towards you that any new dog comes to the picture will be a threat.

Posted by: Youzenrin | October 29, 2016 6:06 AM

ps - re: Great article!

Forgot to mention - owners of 2 sibling pups don't often run into trouble until the Dogs are going through adolescence until up to 3/4 years old. Then you're safe!

Posted by: love labs | May 22, 2016 6:25 AM

Great article!

I run a home-from-home boarding business which I started when my first Lab passed away at 18 years old. I didn't want to get another Dog straight away - so this was the next best thing and I've loved it. The time then came when we (2 children, husband and myself) wanted to get another Dog. We did our research as we wanted to get a similar pedigree to our last Lab. We went to see a breeder and her puppies. I fell in love with a male pup and my husband and our children fell in love with a bitch. The breeder was uncertain to let us have both. I told her that after seeing both pups, I had returned home and done a lot of research about getting sibling pups - all negative! The rivalry, the bonding etc etc. However, due to the nature of my business and my knowledge of Dogs, I decided I could do it. My two labs are now three years old. They are well socialised, due to my business, they sleep in separate crates at night - I was against crating at first, until I started my Dog business, when I saw other Dogs whose owners brought their crates with them I soon realised that a crate was a safe place for them to go to get some peace and quiet and if used as a place of comfort and security rather than a punishment they work very well. My Dogs are still trained and walked separately most of the time - but I have the time to do this - it's my job! When they were puppies, I took on the 'mother' role - I slept with them for weeks, in order to reduce the bonding between them and to enhance the bond with me. My children were not allowed to play with them in a boisterous manner - they had to be calm and quiet. It has been hard work but lovely. Would I recommend anyone else to get 2 sibling pups? No! It's not fair on the Dogs! Why? Because naturally in a litter of pups there are individual personalities. One will be dominant, one will be shy, one will be boisterous etc. Your job as the pups new mum is to make sure that he/she becomes a secure, happy, well-balanced and well-socialised Dog. So... the dominant pup can get more dominant and the other pup you get gets more insecure and relies on the dominant pup to do his/her work for him/her. That's where you run into behavioural problems. Mine are fine - not perfect - slightly still immature as there are two of them. But I have spent A LOT of time with them, again, It's my job. Advice - don't do it.

Posted by: love labs | May 22, 2016 6:15 AM

I stopped reading after "CRATING" was mentioned REALLY do you have to lock a family member up in a crate at night or any other time-if so you have a whole different angle on having a pet than most dog lovers. I'm 50 and through my life starting at birth up to now have had 5 dogs and a litter of seven from one of them, never needing to put any in a box over night. I also have three healthy grown up boys and a teen who did not need a seperate "cave " to mum and dad at night until well into toddler age. CRATING is done by non dog lovers who want a source of entertainment not a pet to love and share their life with.

Posted by: H | April 12, 2016 3:43 PM

I got a second puppy thinking the first puppy would be happy to have the company; he so much enjoyed playing with other dogs at the park. It was a big mistake. While they get along now (it's been seven years, and I guarantee my first dog would still not mind if my second disappeared), it took months before they adjusted. The second puppy was very dominant and made my first dog miserable. I felt horrible. I brought in a dog behaviorist who referred me to a trainer, who helped, but ultimately I think the biggest help was when dog #2 was neutered. I'm not saying never get a second dog, but I would wait until the first dog is an adult, and also would make sure that you can do a trial to see whether the dogs get along.

Posted by: puppypig | February 8, 2016 11:26 AM

Years ago, I adopted 4 puppies at once and they were a lot of work. But since they were to be euthanized that day, I did it anyway. Never regretted it and had none of the problems you say will exist with 2. 2 weeks ago we adopted 2 siblings at 6.5 weeks old as their mom had passed. I have no regrets at this point and doubt that I ever will. I have always had more than one animal and have always felt like when I had kids, you must train and discipline them and then.. they are great! Having had twins I can also tell you that after they are about a year old an can both walk – to a certain point, they do take care of themselves.

and I find this article offensive – imagine if we generalized about people like that!

Posted by: Teresa R | November 1, 2015 10:34 AM

I'm not trying to be rude.. But this is really crap.

See, I have five dogs. Truman our golden retriever was 6 weeks old with a broken leg and rib. He was really skinny. No one wanted him and was about to be put down. So we took him. (sweetest dog still to this day)

About a year in a half he fell into doggy depression as my vet had called it. Wouldn't eat or anything. The vet said we should think about adopting one other. So we took it in to consideration. About a month later we got my black lab, Jade, who is always happy. She too was about to be put down. (some guy left her on a concrete patio with a chain embedded into her neck, her wounds were so bad that again, nobody wanted to take the responsibility of her care.) and the day we brought her home Truman fell in love. Started eating again and playing yet they both wanted our full attention. 2 years ago I ended up taking in a miniture grey hound Chihuahua mix, Abel, who just wants to be babied all day. Well 10 months ago I got two german shepherd rot mixes. At first I thought, oh this is going to be crazy. What have I done? But to say the least I have no regrets. They are all well taken care of. Walked, fed, played with. And for the most part completely trained. The puppies still have their accidents don't get me wrong. But they're still puppies. Let them be puppies. My fiance and I spend time with them all alone. And then we spend time with them altogether. You see, what you got wrong was we become a family. They aren't just pets. They're children. If you have twins do you seperate them and say, "because I have two, they'll be harder to potty train so I need to give one up." ? Or "I'm giving one up because if I don't they'll be closer to eachother than me?" I bet not.

These dogs of mine play as a family, eat as a family, spend time together as a family, and go to bed knowing they are loved and will never be seperated.

They even act as if they are a family. They get into fights and cop up an attitude. I have had to put them in time out on multiple occasions. But after it's done they go back to playing and being happy. So no. I don't believe that it's a big deal to have more than one puppy at a time. Actually, it's been a lot of fun watching them grow up together. If you can make the time for them, and it is a lot of work, but it's worth it.

Posted by: Beachnerd1996 | October 31, 2015 3:24 AM

#7 I got two stray puppies both are sisters. But if u cud give me some tips on how to raise the perfectly together. Thanks

Posted by: sid | July 14, 2015 3:26 PM

Also, the rough play problems, in my experience, happen with all puppies and even with littermates it lessened tremendously with maturity. After the age of about one they all prefer my husband and I to their littermates or any other dog we own.

Posted by: Karen Bryan | March 23, 2015 5:01 PM

I appreciate this informative article and yet have not found any real scientific to back up your claims. I have raised several pairs of littermates who did extremely well together and had none of these issues as well as having had friends who have done the same. Saying "most trainers" or "responsible breeder" is not backed up by any statistical analysis that I could see. It may be that what you say here is sometimes true but to publish your opinions as fact seems misleading.

I

Posted by: Karen Bryan | March 23, 2015 4:57 PM

I'm just curious, if anyone could enlighten me. I'm stuck in an emotional situation. I adopted a puppy, a male husky/german shepherd mix. The same day my sister decided she was going to adopt one too, but hers was a female. At the time she was in a location that did not allow animals, so my husband and I offered to watch her puppy until they found a new place. (We live 10 hours away from where she is located). It's been about 2 months of us having the puppies and she just now got her new house. The puppies are about 4 months old now and are very close. I feel terrible for separating them, but we have to return to our house. I guess what I'm asking is, after being together for so long, and practically being attached by the hip, will this leave any emotional damage on the puppies at this age by separating them?

Posted by: MeganA828 | January 17, 2015 1:23 AM

We adopted two female Dachshund Puppies, after the death of my oldest Dachshund, at the age of 13. My girls are now 6 months old. Will be spayed next week. I couldn't be happier with our choice. They are sisters. They are bonded with each other, but also bonded with us. One sleeping on my lap now. I work from home. So they spend the day with me. Potty training is going well, as we watch them, and take them to potty pads, or outside often. They are also playing well with their big brother. We limit the time together, if he gets cranky. He is a five year old dachshund, and not always excited for the puppies. I was concerned about them only bonding with each other. They rowdy and play, but the second they see me or my husband, they are in our laps. They love to cuddle with us, and play. The only problem in training is it has been hard to leash train. Not enough arms for three dogs.

But we have six acres and a giant dog pen. So it is not a big deal, if they are not perfect on a leash. They love visitors and any company. All three very friendly.

The girls share a kennel, and sleep together at night. But they still would rather be with us. I think someone just needs to be with them a lot. The breeder never questioned it, I doubt she cared. She could tell they would get a good home.

Posted by: Doxlover | November 13, 2014 4:17 PM

We are looking to adopt one or two female dogs. We are a family with 3 teens and a child under 10 yrs. We have 4 cats and found 2 very cute and friendly black lab puppies (sisters) that we would love to adopt. After reading this article, I'm still convinced that our family can take care of 2 dogs at the same time. Is it a bad idea? They are the only dogs that we have so far found and fell in love with. ANY SUGGESTIONS?

Posted by: puppylover4 | November 3, 2014 4:22 PM

the articles are good & informative. i have a just 6month old pure german breed (remo's grandson)gsd pippy.i 'm going to adopt a female gsd puppy 4months old. i 'm hopeful they will be a good couple.plz. advise do's & don'ts. arunabha (calcutta, india)

Posted by: arunabha majumdar | July 3, 2014 8:07 AM

Littermate owners!!! Don't be dismayed!!!

I have two male littermates, 5 months old. They love each other dearly, they also fight like siblings, play, and are little ratbags as well. But you have to remember THEY ARE PUPPIES!! They're learning everyday!! So it's about what you teach them. Sure, owning two puppies is absolutely hard work, double the poop, double the mess, double the food, double the vet bills for those early vaccinations etc.

The great news is, it's double the love, double the cuddles and they have a friend to play with.

My top tips are, get the straight into puppy classes and take them separately. This gives them a chance to socialise and build confidence as an individual rather than as part of a pair. They won't feel so reliant on their littermate when out and about and this helps with any separation anxiety.

Crate them separately, they need their own safe place where they can have a break from their sibling when things get a little too exciting and one needs a rest. Crates are also good for time outs, but wait til they enjoy using their crate for pleasure before using it for punishment, otherwise they'll never want to go in. Get some play pens too, so you can have a break from them. Good time to clean the house, have a nice hot bath or just some relaxation. After all, the first couple of months come with very little sleep.

Walks should be taken separately. My partner and I walk one dog each every day, usually morning so wear off that extra energy so they don't destroy the house and yard.

I only take both of them on my own if I am taking them to a dog park and will have them off leash or am doing recall practice. It's a whole lot of extra work with two puppies, but it's absolutely worth it. Socialise them as much as possible, register with a reputable training school, crate train them and enjoy all the love!!!

Posted by: JulesMikWoo | May 27, 2014 11:00 PM

I agree with Pat Miller 100%. When I was a 10 year old child (back in the 1970s) my parents adopted two mixed breed puppies from the same litter. They bonded very strongly with each other. My 10 year old me tried hard to train them (my parents offered no support on that front – this was the 1970s when attitudes towards family pets was more laissez-faire) and I always remember with sadness how, when one died, the other died within two months, despite having been at full health up until that end moment. I would never now advocate getting two puppies together, for all the reasons Pat has outlined. Thank you.

Posted by: Karen W | December 1, 2013 1:59 AM

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Posted by: Karen W | December 1, 2013 1:59 AM

As a hobby breeder of shelties, I have grown out litter mates from time to time and have not noticed any issues with bonding only to each other but not to me.

I did have one experienced owner who purchased two of my pups and they also have bonded to their human family quite well. As far as their response to being separated, I expect any family member to miss one another on occasion. That is just part of a

normal range of emotions common in humans and canines alike.

I had one dog years ago that adored having other dogs to play with. Being an "only child", he would get in these black, depressed moods every time we came home from the park, leaving his buddies behind. Attention and attempts to play with him did nothing to lighten his mood. A second dog solved the problem and he became a happier pup for it. I would have found it hard to insist that he should have suffered in order to "train" him to bond with me (which he did anyway).

Whether one or two, each has it's unique challenges, both which require time and energy. I don't see one as more difficult than the other, just different in focus.

Posted by: Linda M | November 30, 2013 11:43 PM

One thing I didn't see mentioned is the possibility of two litter mates spending their entire adult lives fighting. We see this quite often in Doberman rescue, especially when the puppies are the same sex. Whenever someone calls and tells me "I bought litter mates..." they don't even need to finish. The dogs spend every waking moment trying to kill each other. They want to relinquish one or both dogs. I've lost count of the number of times I've heard this story. And the puppies have always come from a backyard breeder.

I've never understood the "logic" that having two puppies will be easier because they'll entertain each other. Would you tell a pregnant woman "I hope you have twins. They'll raise each other. It'll be so much easier for you."?

Posted by: Unknown | August 26, 2013 2:36 PM

My husband and I have two German Shepherd dogs, 3 years old and litter mates. We did training separately, and our dogs are definitely bonded to us and to each other. We both have had dogs our whole lives, and know that one or two, you must be committed to putting in the work with any pup. House training didn't take that long, no longer then with one dog. They just need routine and consistency. We got two because we have the time to work with them, we take them everywhere with us, and love spending time with them. Anyone who says they want two so they can exercise themselves shouldn't have dogs. Dogs love running and playing, if you don't, don't have pets.

Posted by: Dogs 4 life | July 25, 2013 1:34 PM

minbab, I was so discouraged too this past winter, but take a deeeeep breath, I did it with one lame arm and leg, I'm betting you can do this! It will get better, and be so worth it.

Posted by: yorkylover | April 25, 2013 11:43 AM

I just bought 2 yorkies, now a year old, I am disabled , lame leg and 1 arm/hand, and was so desperate after my 16 year old yorkie died last summer, I ignored all the warnings about getting 2. Potty training on pad was so hard, it threatened my sanity, haha, roll eyes.....now they are 99% trained, PRAISE THE LORD!!!! CUZ i COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT MYSELF.....it took almost a year, but I did remain sane....somehow! I am so thankful to Jesus, these pups are so sweet, there is some fighting, but it was helpful to put them in seperate crates. They both have bonded with me, with each other, my 2 cats and I am so grateful! I will do some seperate walks this spring(if it ever comes lol)I do think that makes alot of sense as I do not want them to suffer separation issues. It seems I cannot snuggle with both at once or a fight breaks out, I hope that can be dealt with, any ideas how to do that?

Posted by: yorkylover | April 25, 2013 10:47 AM

I adopted 2 puppies at the age of 8 weeks and they are 8 months now. I am having a very difficult time training them. I just read this article and I guess I am an idiot. I can't afford a dog trainer and I am considering returning them to the foster family. Really discouraged.

Posted by: minnbab57 | January 25, 2013 6:52 PM

WE had a couple of litter-mates, boy and girl Lhasa Apsos and had none of the problems mentioned. Jenny bonded securely with me, and Sam with my husband, though they both loved our whole family (4 kids, 2 cats, 2 rabbits and assorted cage animals) even after going to my mother's house at 6 months Jenny gave me rapturous greetings every time I went over (3-4 x a week). BTW they suffered no separation anxiety either, Jenny lived with my Mom for 4 years, and they adored each other. When my Mom passed on she came "home" and again had no problems settling in after a mourning period. We are very affectionate with our animals, and train them naturally with no "clicks" or treats, and had no problems at all. They have both passed on now, Jenny at 14 and Sam at 16, I miss them terribly, and would happily get litter-mates again.

Posted by: Unknown | May 12, 2012 12:31 AM

I adopted 2 sisters 8 years ago. I agree with much that's said in the article, and it hasn't been easy, but in the end, the benefits have outweighed the risks. I think I'd do it over again--maybe not.

A couple of comments:

1. They *must* be trained--starting early. With one dog, if an owner is lazy and doesn't train it, things might work out. But with two, you have no choice. My girls learn better and faster when I train them together.
2. I don't mind that they have their own special bond between them. I have bonded separately with each of them, and we have also bonded as a team. Now that they are mature, we have a *lot* of fun together. If anything happened to me, they have each other. They have each other when I'm busy or I've gone out. I don't feel that they depend on me for stimulation. I don't feel guilty if they don't get their exercise, because they still tear around the house chasing each other.
3. Over the years I've tried separating them when each can have an exciting experience, but they don't seem to like it. I've stopped trying. Curiously, the dominant one misses her lackey more than vice versa.

Bottom line: We're a very happy family.

Posted by: muriel33 | May 1, 2012 7:41 PM

I have to disagree with the author! I think it is very wrong to make a blanket statement as has been done. Every breed is different and every person is different. With some dog breeds, it may be true ... but I know that Newfoundlands are very different from any other dog breed and I know many Newfy owners with more than one, some siblings from same litters etc. that have not run into the problems mentioned. I think this article is poorly written without much merit.

Posted by: djgiffordrn | March 25, 2012 5:49 PM

This article speaks the truth, and I know from experience. At the time when I was getting my pups I did express my feelings that 2 may be too much. As you can guess I listened to the breeder instead of listening to my own intuition and feelings. Were they adorable... were they best buddies... Yes and yes. Were they work... Yes and yes. Honestly they weren't twice the work they were four times the work. Training had to be repeated so many times. apart and then together and then with other dogs. If your dogs don't listen in all situations inside and outside of your home then they aren't really enjoyable to live with or take places. After all my work and patience they still bonded closer to each other than they did to me.

I do believe that getting 2 pups at once can be a wonderful experience for someone, even if that wasn't my experience. I also believe that the odds are in the favor that it doesn't work out as planned much more often than the happy easy experience. In closing my opinion is don't expect twice the work, the reality is quadruple the work.

Posted by: Tater | October 12, 2011 10:50 PM

DITTO Rebeca Deming R post. I am now the proud owner of 2 13week old beagle brothers. I adopted them at 8 weeks. No way I could EVER give them up but the amount of work associated with raising them is just like (or worse) what is stated in the very informative article. I'll head all of the advise given but giving them up is NOT an option. I'll keep on referring to your articles and hopefully there will be more to come. Training starts (separately) next week so wish me luck.

Posted by: Yvonne W | October 12, 2011 11:36 AM

Hmmm... I dislike when we make imperical statements regarding issues such as two puppy adoptions. Though much in this article does apply to the typical dog acquirer, there are certainly issues of bonding and emotional well-being that I think sometimes need to be taken into account for the best interests in the placing of a dog.

I have a related family of basset hounds that allow me to live with them~ Ok, so there is never really room on the couch for me, but I think I am ok with that.

Our first boy was a basset named Harry Pawtear who many trainers in Northern California are familiar with. We dutifully went to puppy class and took him to dog parks. He was frightened in the puppy class when they had to bang metal bowls together to separate two sparring puppies, and in the parks, he basically sniffed the perimeter and avoided the other dogs. But when we took him back to the breeder to play with his sister, he glowed with happiness and mutual play. Until that moment, I never thought or considered the value of dog-dog famial relationships and the emotional impact of separating some dogs. When we would leave to go home, it was like he was there, but something was missing. My solution was to go visit the breeder frequently. I now strongly recommend this and we frequently have relations who come and go and get to visit each other.

Over the years, the breeder became older and could no longer take care of her core group. We ended up acquiring Harry's sister, father, half-sister and a few smatterings of other relations along the way. For many years Harry and his sister Mamie enjoyed mutual play, though over the years, their relationship with each other did change. Mamie preferred to play more with the father, Luther, and Harry with his cousin, Arnie. Maybe the answer is to acquire four related dogs? ;D

I will also say that there is a special bond that frequently appears to exist between a mother and a female puppy that should be acknowledged when possible. This always strikes me with shelter dogs and rescues, that we separating them way too soon and often causing great emotional distress to the dam. I would like to see more acknowledgement of bonding at the shelter and rescue level.

We also have developed a human-dog extended family which has made a huge difference to Charlie and TheBeaver, two bonded brothers. They live separately, but get to see each other and play frequently. They are now seven and have a remarkable relationship that also involves field trialing together. So my other recommendation is if there are littermates who are bonded, find a family who has close friends or other family to take the littermate so they get to have this kind of visitation.

Many bassets do extremely well when placed with relatives, or as second dogs. Though they have bonded relationships with those dogs, that never gets in the way of their interactions with humans which are very rich and fulfilling. I agree about separate training, though for me, that just means one is in a long down or in a crate while I work with another. But walking and socializing? I think they do very well out together, and I think that is of benefit to the person walking them, to them because they can "tackle the weird world with a buddy", and the human is just along for the ride anyway~ Scent hounds like bassets also do need walks on a regular basis using a long lead in a hiking area so that they can follow that bunny trail under the brush. With two, you slip on a coupler and they will work together on following the scent and communicate with each other about the scent, which is an amazing experience to get to see in related scent hounds.

Just some thoughts and my experience.

Posted by: saraberry | July 28, 2011 11:33 AM

Having acquired two puppies at once and having none of the problems noted I have to surmise that I am very lucky or the two pups were extra special or whatever it was. What it wasn't ever was a problem. The two brothers were great additions to our home.

Posted by: Bill N | May 4, 2011 10:29 AM

Wow -- why didn't I see this before now? I have two rottie pups, litter mates, who just turned 11 weeks old today and I am already seeing them bonding more with each other than with us, so it's great to have this validation that I'm not imagining things. We're starting with a trainer next week who has already advised us to start separating the pups and doing things individually, but I hadn't thought of that before. It's too late for the woulda-shoulda-couldas, and there's no way I'm letting either one of them go, so thank you for these great suggestions!

Posted by: Rebecca Deming R | March 24, 2011 2:35 PM

Just read this after putting my girl and boy littermate 6 month old goldens to bed. Fortunately between my vet and two trainers I work with, most, but not all of your suggestions we had heard and have taken to heart! So far so good, and with the exception of all the poop, no regrets. But I have put an enormous amount of time into training and grooming them together and separately. Never could have accomplished this if I worked outside of the home. They have clearly bonded with us and can handle their buddy gone to separate training class or the vet. And they wear each other out playing really hard. I learned some more from your article - thank you!

Posted by: Barbara B | March 9, 2011 12:57 AM

I must have missed this when it first come out. I work in rescue and, on occasion, have had people want to adopt 2 pups at once. I have always warned against it citing the very reason you have stated here. I try to go through all the things they will have to do when they have 2 pups at once. I try to stress that the pups HAVE to be separated for training and bonding purposes. I will be adding this article to our, 2 puppy, adoption information. Since most people do not take notes at adoption time it will make for good reference material. Thank you

Deborah Pruy
Adirondack Save-A-Stray

Posted by: DEBORAH P | October 6, 2010 10:09 AM