



A Tale of Two Siblings: Adopting Littermates

The idea of adopting littermate puppies can seem like an adorable, fun idea. They'll play with each other, keep each other company, and they're guaranteed to get along. Right? Unfortunately, not so much. Bringing home littermates can be a recipe for disaster.

WHY SHOULD YOU THINK TWICE ABOUT ADOPTING LITTERMATE PUPPIES?

While there is no scientific evidence supporting or disputing the risks and/or benefits of adopting littermates (what some people call "littermate syndrome"), there are a lot of red flags related to adopting puppies from the same litter.

- **Issue 1: Lack of Training and Socializing**
 - Training, socializing, housetraining, and caring for two young puppies can be more difficult than you'd imagine. Often certain components of puppy rearing are lost or done halfheartedly when there's more than one pup, as so much time is dedicated to "surviving the madness."
- **Issue 2: Hyper-attachment**
 - Littermate puppies can quickly become hyper-attached, unable to cope without the presence of the other. Often one pup suffers with this more than the other. If this happens, you'll generally see frantic, panicked, fearful, or even aggressive behavior when the pups are separated.
- **Issue 3: Inter-Dog Aggression**
 - Especially among same-sex siblings, fighting can become severe, even dangerous, as they reach maturity. Siblings often play hard, and fight harder.
 - Because many sibling pups are only socialized with each other, they may develop aggression or fear towards other dogs.
 - If you already have a third dog or have family and guests bringing a visiting dog to your home, the littermates may bully or react aggressively towards the "outsider."

- **Issue 4: Difficulty with Training**

- Since the pups are already bonded with each other, it can be difficult to train them since it's harder to get their attention away from each other and onto you. Their time is spent on playing with each other (or squabbling) and instead of being an asset to them, you may become the party interrupter instead.

WHAT IF YOU ALREADY BROUGHT HOME LITTERMATE PUPPIES?

For those of you who already have sibling pups at home, you can take a proactive approach to help you survive the growth and development of sibling puppies without sacrificing your sanity and the pups' well-being.

Don't panic! In many cases, littermates can grow up to lead normal, healthy lives in the same household.

Here's what you need to know:

- Give the puppies periodic time apart every single day. That means they should regularly be walked separately, played with separately, and trained separately.
- Do not allow the pups to share a crate.
- Feed meals separately, and out of two separate bowls.
- Remember that both dogs are individuals. They will have unique personalities, may be motivated differently, and may have different energy levels and quirks.
- Bond with the puppies individually, so that they are able to focus on you and not on each other.
- Socialize the puppies heavily between 8-16 weeks of age. They must meet people and other animals without their sibling present, and should be taken to novel locations separately.

