



BLUE ASH DOG TRAINING

Where Dogs **R+** Good

SO YOU GOT TWO PUPPIES AT ONCE!

Needless to say, if you were to ask any trainer before you decide to get two puppies at once any trainer would say DON'T DO IT!!!! The two most oft-quoted reasons for getting two at once are:

- #1. I don't have time to give to one, so I'll get two and they can keep each other company; and
- #2. The kids wanted one each.

So how's that going for you? Two puppies at once is more than twice the trouble, as you are probably already discovering. Essentially, if you don't have time for one, then sure as Christmas comes once a year you don't have time for two! And since when did kids get to make the rules? Since when did kids follow through on doing all the looking after of their pets? Usually it's Mum who picks up the slack.

But you've done it now, and you're committed, so here are some things you will need to understand about having two puppies at the same time.

Relationship with each other: Whilst it is lovely watching two puppies grow up and play together, there are a few things you will need to understand about their relationship to each other, and their relationship with you and the rest of your family.

You will need to have eyes not only in the back of your head, but in the sides as well – one puppy can get into a bit of trouble chewing something up before you've noticed – two puppies can absolutely destroy an object quicker than you can say Jack Robinson. Which one consumed the piece of missing toy? Is it going to cause a blockage? Do I really have to x-ray two of them to find out?

That's up to you, but it's something you need to think about.

The siblings may have a lovely relationship but one will always be more confident and assertive than the other, and unless you have worked the dogs separately you may not realise what the issues are until well down the track and there is a well-practiced unwanted behaviour that has developed almost without you noticing. It will take time and money to fix it unless you put in the foundation now.

To avoid this it is essential that the puppies are taught to enjoy their separate crates, and preferably even get separated at night – one pup in the bedroom with you, and one pup in the bedroom with the kids. Crate training is essential for all puppies, but imperative for two puppies in the same household. Teach them to enjoy having time apart, as there will be a time when they have to be separated later in life and this can be very traumatic for them if they haven't learned early on to enjoy their own company.

When going out, I know it seems “unfair”, but make opportunities to take one and leave the other behind. Swap them around. If two of you are going out separately and it is possible, each take one of the puppies. This also helps them to learn to spend time apart, but it will strengthen the bonds they form with you and their other two-legged family members. Don't worry – they will have plenty of together time.

Relationship with you: There are many ways to help the puppies each bond with you separately. It is worth bearing in mind that you WANT them to have a better relationship with you than they do with each other – believe me, it really is going to make your life easier if you have control over your puppies in all environments with all distractions under all kinds of stress. You don't want them relying on and looking to each other for guidance and support.

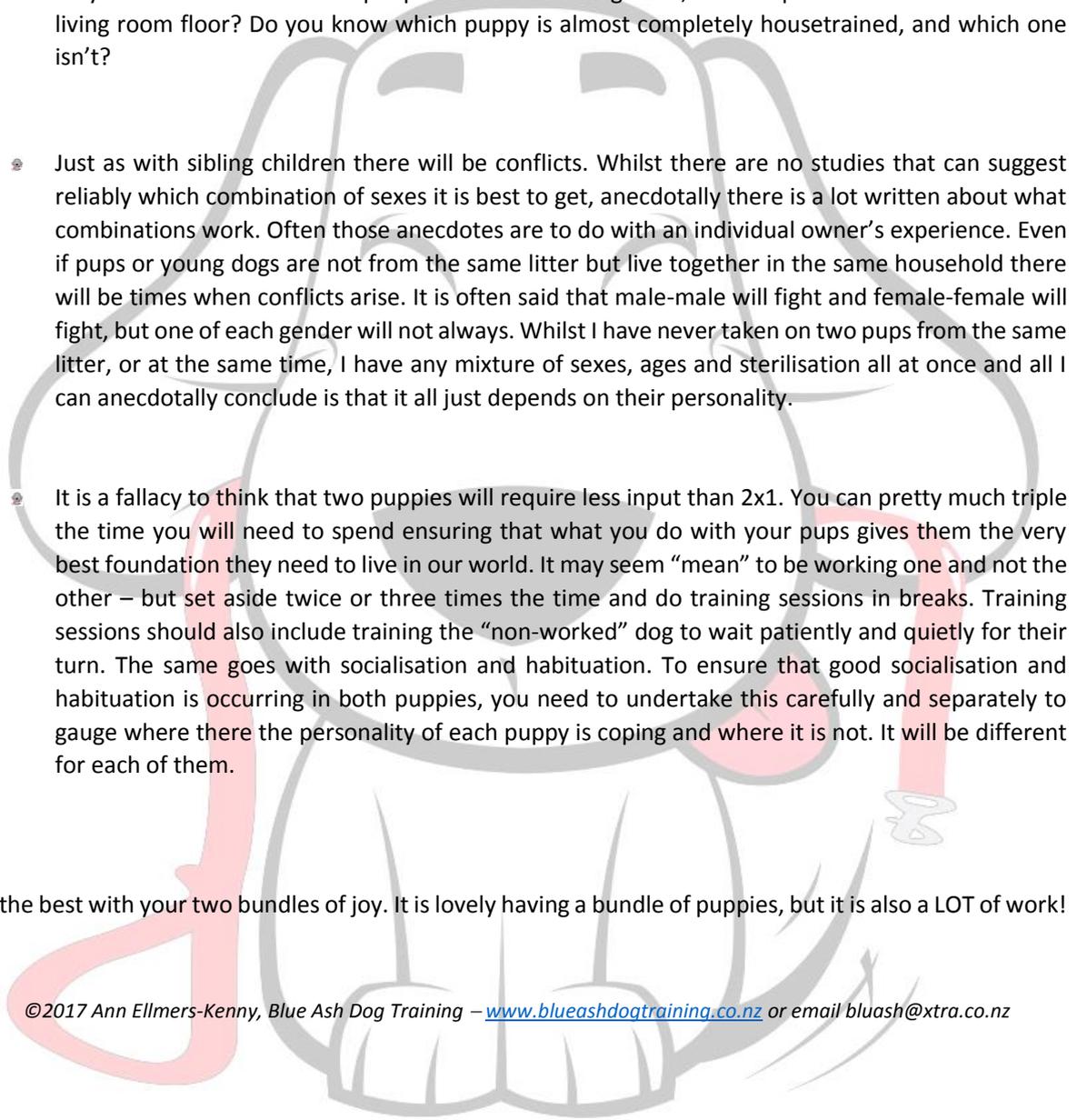
Training: It is important that you do training sessions separately with them, and then eventually also practice those same exercises in the presence of each other. If possible when going to training classes, take them separately or each to a different class. Of course it is important that all members of the family attend the classes and are training the puppies in the same way. It is hard for dogs to learn our language, but they do learn it with consistent repetition and reinforcement. While playing and working with one puppy, have the other crated away in another room if need be, enjoying a delicious stuffed kong or frozen treat.

Play: Puppy duos will play together some of the time, and that's fine. But it is common for one pup to be the more assertive and take the lead in any activities they undertake. You may not notice which one it is until there is a problem, so it is important to also spend time playing with them separately. It is training and play that helps puppies bond – not the person who brings them their food at night! By playing games with them separately it not only helps them bond with you and learn to look to you for guidance and support, but you will also get to know your pups and their personalities better, and will take note of any potential problems that may need a little work before it is too late and you have a problem arising from one pup being more insecure.

Exercise: Just like with your training and your play sessions, your exercise sessions and walking should be done separately. One is walked and taught to walk on lead nicely and cope with the various distractions and stresses in their environment without always having the other there as a back up and support. Even walking them together with two separate handlers is not going to fix this, unless you were to each go in separate directions.

Appointments: Going to the groomers? Make two appointments and take them separately. The vets for their shots? Two appointments and take them separately. Puppy classes? Two separate classes. Of course there are some things they can do together, but you are starting to get the picture. It is important that they learn all about life in a human family and relate to those experiences without the other always being there. This is to ensure that each is equally getting the same amount of attention, training, exposure and socialisation experiences that all puppies require without the interference of the other. Of course they can do things together, but you must be sure that whatever you do with your puppies they are completely relaxed without the presence of the other.

For me to have given you this handout, you have probably already made the decision and got two puppies at once, even perhaps from the same litter. If you had asked me, or any of my colleagues before you made your decision, then our advice would assuredly have been not to do it. Here are some of the considerations why:

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- Obviously two puppies will cost twice as much as one, and you've already considered that of course. However, have you thought about the trouble that two puppies can get into and do you know which one might have ingested the missing piece of leggo or chewed up whatever? That's two x-rays, not one. If you're having toileting issues and think it may be to do with a tummy bug and your pups are not yet toilet trained – how do you know which one you are having an issue with? If it is contagious, then you have two quarantines and two sets of vet appointments and medications.
 - Whilst your puppies are young and you are still teaching them toilet training, there is twice the amount of clean up required. No one can be eagle-eyeing their puppies 100% of the time, so how do you know who it was that pooped under the dining table, or left a puddle in the middle of the living room floor? Do you know which puppy is almost completely housetrained, and which one isn't?
 - Just as with sibling children there will be conflicts. Whilst there are no studies that can suggest reliably which combination of sexes it is best to get, anecdotally there is a lot written about what combinations work. Often those anecdotes are to do with an individual owner's experience. Even if pups or young dogs are not from the same litter but live together in the same household there will be times when conflicts arise. It is often said that male-male will fight and female-female will fight, but one of each gender will not always. Whilst I have never taken on two pups from the same litter, or at the same time, I have any mixture of sexes, ages and sterilisation all at once and all I can anecdotally conclude is that it all just depends on their personality.
 - It is a fallacy to think that two puppies will require less input than 2x1. You can pretty much triple the time you will need to spend ensuring that what you do with your pups gives them the very best foundation they need to live in our world. It may seem "mean" to be working one and not the other – but set aside twice or three times the time and do training sessions in breaks. Training sessions should also include training the "non-worked" dog to wait patiently and quietly for their turn. The same goes with socialisation and habituation. To ensure that good socialisation and habituation is occurring in both puppies, you need to undertake this carefully and separately to gauge where there the personality of each puppy is coping and where it is not. It will be different for each of them.

All the best with your two bundles of joy. It is lovely having a bundle of puppies, but it is also a LOT of work!