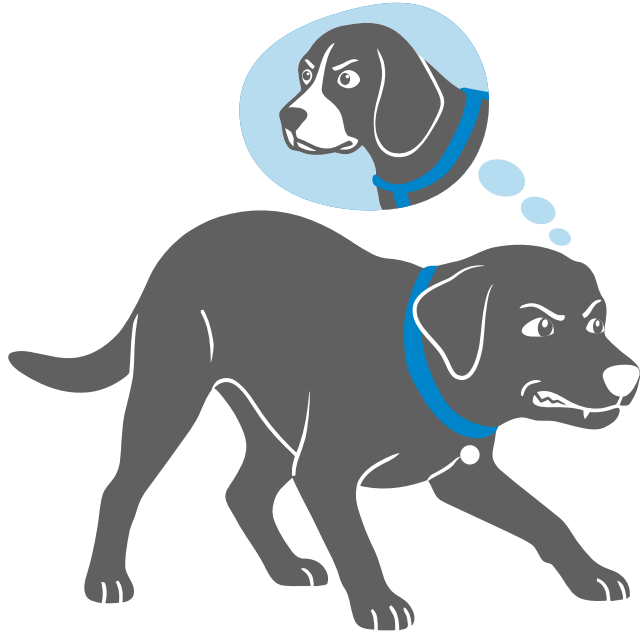


SPOT THE SIGNS BEFORE A DOG FIGHT HAPPENS



Fights can happen for lots of reasons, including between dogs that:

- Feel afraid or unsafe.
- Are forced to interact when they don't want to.
- Feel trapped (on their lead or in an environment that does not offer an option to escape).
- Are resource guarding something that is important to them (like food, toys or favourite people).
- Have poor social skills.
- Are too excited (and are not making good decisions).
- Are in pain (as this makes them uncomfortable and less tolerant).

FIGHTS DON'T HAPPEN OUT OF NOWHERE

- Dogs that are feeling unsafe show lots of signs before they react.
- If your dog does not like other dogs, consider walking at quieter times when there are fewer dogs around or in industrial areas where fewer people walk their dogs.
- Another option is not walking your dog. See our [More than Walks](#) handout for tips for dogs that don't cope on walks.
- Many dog fights occur because one, or both, of the dogs feel threatened or overwhelmed, not because they are "aggressive."

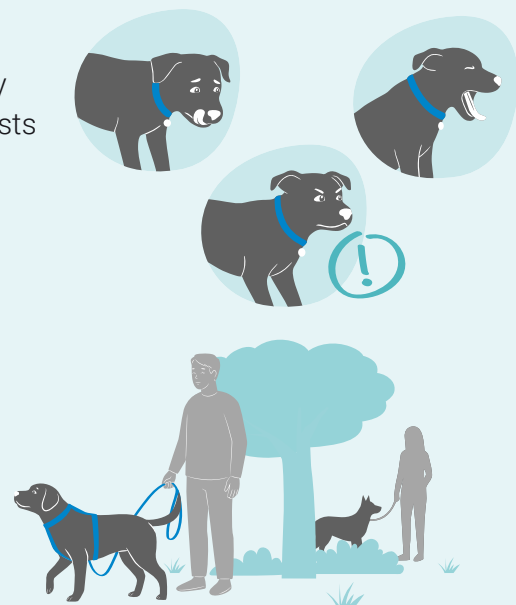
WATCH OUT FOR BODY LANGUAGE THAT MAY LEAD TO CONFRONTATION

By paying close and calm attention to how your dog is feeling, many dog fights can be avoided. Watch out for body language that suggests a "confrontational" nature. This includes:

- lip-licking
- a forward stance
- hard stares
- stiff body
- growling
- raised or slightly trembling lip corners

If you notice these signs, try to calmly move your dog away to reduce your risk of a fight happening immediately. You could:

- walk backwards
- cross the street
- put a barrier between the dogs (like a tree, car or fence)



HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

There may be circumstances where you are unable to move away to avoid a dog fight, such as where you are surprised by an off-lead dog that runs up to you. Many dogs now live in close contact with others, it is important to have a plan for what you can do if there is a fight that you have not been able to avoid:

1 Human safety always comes first

- Do NOT grab the dog by the collar or any body part in front of dog's hips.
- Do NOT hit, punch, kick, tackle, or pin the dogs.
- Do NOT place yourself or another person between fighting dogs.



2 Keep the leash loose

- Tight leads can increase tension and frustration for dogs, leading to escalation of the fight.

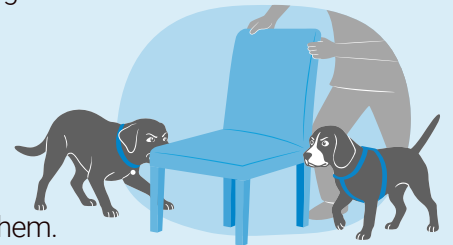
3 Remain calm and communicate

- Call for help.
- More than one person is needed when there is a dog fight.
- Ask everyone in the area to remain calm and to move away from the fight.



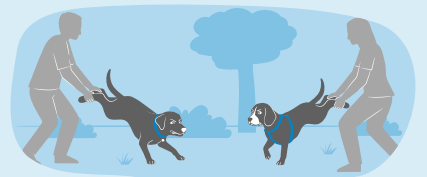
4 Try to separate the dogs without touching them

- Try distraction first:
 - Whistle loudly.
 - Bang a bucket, bin or chair as loudly as you can.
 - Throw a bucket of water on the dogs or use a garden hose to spray them.
- Place a barrier between the dogs to move them apart, such as:
 - A chair
 - A table
 - A push bike
 - A large sign



5 As a last resort, VERY CAREFULLY use the wheelbarrow technique

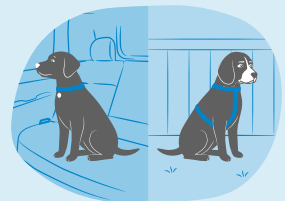
- Requires two people.
- Each person lifts the back legs of one dog (like a wheelbarrow).
- Move towards each other until the dogs release their grip on each other.
- Move backwards away from each other.
- Do not pull if either of the dogs is biting – this can make injuries worse.



The wheelbarrow technique carries a risk of a bite to you. Consider your safety first.

6 Secure the dogs

- Create a slip lead lasso with leads or rope and place one or more around each dog's head and neck.
- Take care not to strangle the dogs by holding the lasso too tight.



7 Move the dogs out of sight of one another

- Make sure they are secured in an area/ car/ yard where they cannot see or reach each other again.

AFTER A FIGHT

- Keep dogs separated.
- Check yourself for injuries first.
- Look over the dogs for injuries – do not touch them as they may be sore and bite. Dog fights can lead to very serious injuries and even death.
- Even small punctures can be serious and wounds will likely become infected.
- See a vet as soon as possible **the same day as the fight.**

Most dog fights can be prevented by staying aware, giving dogs space, and acting early to keep everyone safe.