

STOP THE DOGFIGHT!

by Lee Netzler

As dog admirers, the last thing we want to see is two dogs fighting. Regardless of breed, size, sex, or temperament, dogs will sometimes fight.

The perfect answer to dog fighting is to act before a fight breaks out. The best plan is to be defensive whenever your dog is going to be in close quarters with other dogs. This requires being alert to the situation and to your dog's emotional state so that you can intervene by restraining your dog or retreating from a setting that poses danger.

But, prevention is not always possible. We are not always as alert as we should be, and sometimes the forewarning clues are nearly impossible to detect. Sometimes circumstances are beyond our control, such as a loose dog menacing others. Walking your dog on leash through a collection of other dogs at a show or trial presents more opportunities for confrontations than does a walk through the local park. Yet, in either place, a dog fight could suddenly erupt.

When we find ourselves beyond prevention, the question becomes "How do we stop two dogs from fighting?"

There are a few methods that merit consideration. In most cases, I learned about them through discussions with other dog owners or by reading about them. No one can say for certain that any particular technique will bring success. Instead, it would be prudent to become familiar with them as options which could be used to disengage two fighting dogs. If you are aware that these tactics are available, they should help you to respond more effectively to stop a dog fight.

Before listing options, it should be noted that unless they are small dogs, one person cannot stop two dogs from further fighting. When two larger dogs are fighting, at least two people need to be involved so that when the dogs are separated, they can be kept apart and restrained from further engagement. Keep in mind that you might be the second person who needs to get involved to bring a dog fight to a successful conclusion.

The suggestions offered below are not "pretty please" solutions. But, when two dogs engage in serious fighting, it is not a "pretty please" event, and any action which is effective in stopping the fight is worth knowing about. Choices such as spraying two fighting dogs with a water stream from a garden hose are not considered here, because the crises we face almost never have such a convenient solution at hand. Instead, more realistic alternatives will be presented.

The first option to stop a dog fight is to throw a coat, or a tablecloth, or a blanket over the heads of both dogs, then encircling their necks and pinning them in the darkness. It is reported that the

two dogs, finding themselves completely in the dark, will unlock their jaws and struggle to escape back into the light so that they can see again. If the cloth is thick enough, the chance of getting bitten by either dog is lessened, which is an attractive feature of this method.

Another successful tactic to separate fighting dogs was reported as being used by a judge in the conformation ring. She rushed to the site of two fighting dogs. With one hand she grasped one of the dogs at the base of the tail. With her other hand, she jammed her thumb up the dog's rectum. Not a fun activity to contemplate, but it apparently was 100% successful in causing the dog to release his jaw-grip on the other dog so that they could be separated. The judge was reported to calmly proceed to the washroom to tidy up, and then returned to the ring where she continued judging. Except that this technique would not work on some breeds that are "tail-less" or that have had their tails docked, it would apply to all other dogs.

One technique which might be employed is to BITE one of the dogs. Again, the dog's tail would be a good place to chomp down on, because it is a relatively easy target and it is the furthest distance from the jaws of the dog. A secondary site would be to bite the dog's ear, but this increases the danger of getting bitten in return. It is difficult to get a good bite on the hide of a dog, but if it were the best one could do, it would be worth considering. Our teeth are the hardest substance in a human body, and our jaw muscles are superior as well. A well-placed bite could convince a fighting dog to change its focus.

It is fair to mention that a person may be bitten when separating two fighting dogs. Keeping one's head, hands and other body parts away from the toothy end of a dog is important, but not always possible. The risk of being bitten or becoming the object of further attack by a diverted dog needs to be considered and respected.

This last option offered is not always available. It is the advice to grasp the testicles of a male dog engaged in fighting. A strong squeeze is said to bring a quick change of direction to the offending dog's mind and he will disengage from fighting. This remedy is only applicable to unneutered male dogs, so it is a limited option. But, if the opportunity presents itself, it could be the right remedy.

There are other methods which employ using devices such as canes, electric prods, pepper spray, leashes, and so on, but the suggestions offered here rely on very little except what is at hand when an unexpected fight breaks out. While other solutions aren't being discounted, the choices above may offer the best answer in the particular circumstances of the moment.

Preventing a dog fight is always the best solution. *Stopping* a dog fight is the second best solution. Being prepared beforehand can help us do a better job at both.