

## The Sensitive Sheltie

**Shetland Sheepdogs should be socialized early and exposed to other dogs of many breeds and sizes.**

*By Allan Reznik*

Q. I have a Sheltie and I'm curious about his behavior around other dogs. He is OK until they start to play with him, at which point, he begins showing his teeth and foaming at the mouth, trying to fight them. Is that normal and can I correct it? Am I overreacting to just harmless play?

A. You didn't mention how old your Sheltie is, or where you got him. Responsible breeders socialize their puppies early and expose them to other dogs of many breeds, large and small. An adult dog adopted from a shelter or rescue group may not have had the benefit of such early socialization.

Shelties are sensitive dogs. Yours is clearly uncomfortable when approached by strange dogs that want to initiate play, and he is giving you and the other dogs visible signals of his distress.

Don't push him to accept their offers of play without first working on addressing his discomfort. Why not sign him up for a basic obedience class? His confidence level should increase as the two of you work together, and in this structured environment, with all dogs on leash, he can become accustomed to strange dogs and people without feeling overly stressed. During the course of the class, he'll get to know the other dogs and even make friends with some of them and their owners – all in a non-threatening manner and proceeding at his pace.