

## Socializing Your New Dog

### **What to do when your new dog doesn't like the resident dog.**

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Q. My husband and I recently rescued a dog from an elderly person who was unable to care for her anymore. Her name is Molly and she is a beautiful 5- to 7-year-old Rottweiler. We just spent \$700 on surgery for her and she's fully recovered. This is Molly's fourth home and we believe she was abused before the elderly man had her. Our problem is we already own a Rottweiler named Bailey. Molly is very aggressive with other dogs and cats. She even attacked Bailey, and if not for my husband's quick reaction, Bailey would've been seriously hurt. We want to keep both dogs, but we have to keep them in separate rooms. How can we stop them from fighting?

A. I'm sorry to hear about your problem with your new Rottweiler. Inter-dog aggression is a very tough problem, and unfortunately there are no simple answers. You may want to consider finding a new home for Molly, despite the history of abuse, in order to prevent a serious injury to Bailey. In addition, you or your husband could get hurt trying to head off an attack. When a Rottweiler bites, it's usually serious.

If you decide to proceed, I would recommend hiring a professional dog trainer to help. You will need to recondition Molly very gradually, so that she associates Bailey with positive outcomes and rewards. You would start by keeping Molly on a tight leash, and rewarding her for being attentive to you, and nonaggressive in the presence of Bailey. It will take many months and quite a few hours of persistence on your part, and even with all of your work, Molly could revert to her aggressive behavior at any time. There may never be a time when they can be left alone together. I would seriously consider finding a good home for Molly where she would be the only pet.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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