

ONE OR TWO PUPPIES?



by Guylaine Gagnon — translated by Huguette Rainforth

Intro : A few weeks ago, I read an article in a dog magazine about choosing to raise two puppies from the same litter. The author, a canine behaviour specialist, didn't seem to think this was a good idea. I was startled because I have often kept two puppies, some with their mothers and two puppies from a breeder friend. I have wonderful memories of it, but with hindsight, I can see that this expert's advice could have been useful to me because I learned the do's and don'ts, the benefits and pitfalls, the joys and sorrows with my puppies. I never questioned my decision, but ... is it reasonable to raise two puppies together?

Well ... it depends... reasonable and two wolfhounds; are not two words that go together very well.

My wolfhound puppies had the best puppyhood possible and a dream adolescence: only play, running, cuddles, and sleep, run, play, eat. We resume a little later: running, chewing, sleeping, and more hugs. The good life! A joy to watch.

The experience still tempts me ... I seem to have magically forgotten the drawbacks!

If you want, we will go over the advantages and disadvantages of raising puppies from the same litter. So that we don't forget anything in the equation, let's see what criteria should help us choose. And finally, do you really want two? So what advice do the experts give us.

The disadvantages:

- The first argument is very "down to earth." It's about potty training: it's not twice as demanding because you have two dogs, but four times as complicated because you never know who had the mishap, and they won't tell you. By the time it took to clean up one accident, another one has occurred in another corner of the house.
- If the puppies are of the "destroyer" or just "explorer" type, while you are preventing one puppy from eating your sofa, the second will be chewing your boots or mittens.
- One of the biggest challenges of having two puppies from the same litter is that they become very fusional. As much as they have fun together, as much as they find comfort in

living closely together, this fusion can interfere with learning and also with the bond they need to establish with you. You have to be careful because you don't want two half-dogs who cannot live without one another, but two fully accomplished dogs.

- Both puppies must be trained separately for the first year. Separate classes, training sessions, and individual walks are essential for the development of the dogs. In short, everything in duplicate.
- The fusion between two puppies who share everything can prevent them from socializing with other dogs and humans and cause them to develop fear and anxiety about the unknown.
- Conflicts can also arise between two puppies. Small puppy squabbles can escalate as the pups become adults.
- I could have mentioned this first, but in the end, even more down to earth than potty training and more heartbreaking for most of us is cost. Costs is doubled; food, toys, cushions, lessons, and above all, veterinary expenses.
- The saddest thing is watching your puppies grow old. Veteran adults you may lose within a short time of each other, leaving you with the grief of a life spent with two dogs.

There are also advantages:

- For me, the greatest pleasure of having two puppies is seeing them play together for hours on end, burning energy at their own pace and getting the exercise they need, nipping at each other while forgetting your wrists and calves.
- Adopting two puppies allows them to grow up together, cementing their bond of friendship. Throughout their life, your two puppies will never be alone. They will not be upset when you have to leave and will be less likely to suffer from stress or separation anxiety.
- Let's not forget the exponential increase in cuddles. Indeed, most dogs are affectionate by nature, and two dogs are even more so. They feed off of each other, and you end up

- in a cuddle storm!
- The biggest 'pro' about adopting two puppies is all the love that will fill the house. Two dogs is twice as much unconditional love and devotion as only dogs can give.
- If you are a breeder, keeping the two best puppies guarantees the continuity of your lineage. If one has an accident, the second will ensure continuity. The better of the two will become the reproducer, and if the puppies produced are exceptional, the breeder may well consider mating the other. Two puppies for a breeder is insurance for the future.

What is your situation?

Here are some considerations that might help you make an informed decision. Remember to keep in mind that you should not adopt two puppies for fear that one will be lonely while you are away. Your second dog shouldn't be the Band-Aid on the other's boredom and lack of activity.

Take the time to ask yourself a few questions

- Are you at work, telecommuting, or retired? Do you have a lot of time to spend with your dogs?
- Are you experienced with dogs and able to provide them with basic obedience? Two dogs is also double the time and money.
- Do you live in the country, in the city or the suburbs? How much space can be devoted to playing, running, and digging holes? Remember, these little beasts encourage each other!
- Do puppies have access to a large fenced yard or town yard? Can you open the door and tell them to go and spend their excess energy outside without risking damage to your property?
- Can you afford to pay double for dogs that already cost double in vet fees? Is there a veterinarian in your family?

You opt for two puppies. Which sexes?

You are determined to have two puppies, your circumstances allow it, and you have time and energy. Now you have to decide if it will be two males, two females or one of each sex. Know that the most common problem with cohabitation between two dogs is when it involves two males. Two males will seek to prove their dominance, especially if they are not neutered. As in nature, two males will seek to protect their territory and assert themselves as dominant. There can also be conflicts between two females, and in general, these conflicts are more complicated to resolve. Here again, dominance over the other must be well established, and sometimes challenged from the dominated. The male / female duo allows for a much more flexible understanding until sexual maturity or problems may arise. Since sterilization before two or three years is strongly discouraged, you will have to find a solution to isolate your two dogs for a reasonable period of time twice a year. Either you have a kennel, a house that allows for physical separation, or you have friends who will keep one of the two dogs for at least two weeks. These principles cover the most frequent causes, but we have seen perfect harmony between two males if there are no females in the household between two females if the hierarchy is evident.



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The keys to success

- You should treat your two puppies as if they were unique. They need to have as much attention, discipline, and learning on their own, away from their partner, to develop their personality and their full potential.
- Choose very different names and speak their name often with a playful voice when rewarding them, nurturing them, or showing them commandments or tricks.
- Your puppies should socialize with other dogs of different breeds and of all sizes, away from their mate. You will need to take them separately on a leash as well as by car. They must be able to be separated without drama occurring. This learning must be done early because the more time passes, the more the dogs are fusional and autonomous, in all respects.
- Alone time with each dog also allows you to communicate with your dog and build trust and affectionate relationships. The adventure of discovering the world with you should be a part of every puppy's routine.
- You can take obedience classes by alternating one puppy each week and practicing with each one away from their mate.
- If you do conformation competition or lure racing, do not put them in the same class!

- Respect their character; although from the same litter, they are not identical. Each dog has its personality and a way of behaving that must be recognized and accepted.
- If possible, adopt them in the spring to have three seasons to teach them cleanliness and basic obedience.

As I look back on all my puppy pairs, I honestly didn't ask myself all of these questions back then. I already had dogs, and the two puppies were part of a more or less disciplined pack. I was working,

and if not for lack of time and a veterinarian I could call in the middle of the night, it was a real pleasure to see my puppies enjoying life together, and I have wonderful memories of them.



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