

How to Break Up a Dog Fight Without Getting Hurt!



By Ed Frawley



Leerburg Kennels

Foreword

When you view this eBook in PDF format. Click on **BOOKMARKS** on the top left side of your PDF reader, these bookmarks are eBook chapters.

[Leerburg Kennel](#) and Video is owned by Ed Frawley.

Ed has owned German Shepherds (GSD) for over 45 years. Since 1978 he has bred over 350 litters of German working bloodline GSD's. His dogs work in law enforcement, as S&R dogs, as competition Schutzhund dogs, and as family companions and protectors.

Since 1980 Ed has produced over 120 dog training videos and DVD's. He was a police K-9 handler for 10 years, competed in several dog sports, including AKC obedience and Schutzhund. In addition he has built one of the top dog training supply businesses in the world.

If you go to the web site **Leerburg.com**® you will see that it has over 10,000 printed pages. The Leerburg Web Discussion board has over 10,000 registered members and over 120,000 posts in the archives. Learn to use our site search function.

How to Break Up a Dog Fight Without Getting Hurt!

By Ed Frawley



Dog Fights are dangerous events

I have owned, trained and bred dogs for 45 years. I have trained protection dogs and police service dogs since 1974.

If you have come to this page you have issues with aggressive dogs. In the mid 1990's I wrote this article on "How to Break Up A Dog Fight Without Getting Hurt" which you can read below. It has been reprinted (with my permission) in many different languages.

Dealing With Dominant and Aggressive Dogs

\$49.00 +s&h



3 Hours 30 Minutes Long

My web site is over 10,000 pages and a good portion of this site is dedicated to dominant dogs and aggressive dogs. I have organized this page to not only include my article, but also list training DVD's that I have produced to help deal with aggressive dogs, books on dog aggression and links to the numerous articles I have written on the topic of aggressive dogs.

Leerburg® DVDs on Training Aggressive Dogs

DEALING WITH DOMINANT AND AGGRESSIVE DOGS 3 hrs 45 min This DVD demonstrates how to break up a dog fight if you are alone.

Basic Dog Obedience - 4 hours - Obedience training needs to be part of the solution to dog aggression. With that said it's not the only solution. I tell people it's about 25% of the solution. The problem is if that 25% is not addressed you will never solve your problem.

Electric Collar Training for the Pet Owner 2 1/2 hours - This DVD teaches pet owners who have never owned an electric collar how to condition their dog to the collar, how to determine the working level of stimulation to use on their dog (every dog is different) and then there is a detailed step by step section on how to train a dog with an electric collar.



Before we start, I would like to say that I am always looking for photos of dog bites that can be used to demonstrate to others how dangerous breaking up a fight can be. I have included some photos at the bottom of this page and on other dog bite pages in my web site. [If you have a photo - click here to email it:](#)

Basic Dog Obedience

\$40.00 +s&h



4 Hours Long

This past week I had an incident at my kennel that reminds me how important it is for everyone who works with dogs, or owns dogs to know how to break up a dogfight without getting hurt.

I will start with a warning. Unless you have a lot of experience do not try and break up a dog fight by yourself. Never step in the middle of two loving pets and try and grab them by the collar to stop a dog fight. If you try this, the chances of you being badly bitten are extremely high. People don't understand that 2 animals in the middle of a fight are in survival drive. If they see you at all, they don't look at you as their loving

owner. When you charge in and grab them they either react out of a fight reflex and bite, or they see you as another aggressor. When they are in fight or flight mode they will bite you. You can take that to the bank.

Here is what happened at my kennel this week. The wife of a friend came to the kennel with her daughter. She told my secretaries that I had said it was OK to go into my whelping rooms to show her little girl our puppies.

I had never told her this. Anyway, that does not matter. When she left, she did not latch one of the kennel gates properly (this was also an employee mistake for not checking the gate).

Later, one of my kennel staff let another bitch outside. The first bitch jumped against her poorly latched kennel gate, and it came open. She ran outside and started a terrible dog fight. I had not told this young kennel person how to break up a dog fight in progress. He ran in and tried to grab both dog collars. He was bitten very badly in the forearm and hand before I could get on scene and break up the dog fight the correct way.

The safest way to break up a dogfight requires 2 people. Each person grabs the back feet of one of the dogs. The dog back feet are then picked up like a wheelbarrow. With the legs up, both dogs are then pulled apart.

Once the dog fight is broken up and the dogs pulled apart it is critical that the people do not release the dogs or the dog fight will begin again. The two people need to start turning in a circle, or slowly swinging the dogs in a circle while they back away from the other dog. This stops the dog from curling and coming back and biting the person holding their legs.

By circling the dog has to sidestep with its front feet or it will fall on its chin. As long as you slowly continue to back and circle, the dog cannot do any damage to you. To insure that the fight will not begin all over again when you release the dogs, one of the dogs needs to be dragged into an enclosure (i.e. a kennel, the garage, another room) before the dog is released. If you do not do this, the dogs will often charge back and start fighting again or if you release the dog to quickly the dog will turn and attack the person who had his feet.

Dog fights are a very dangerous thing to try and break up alone. You should never rush in and try and grab the dogs to pull them apart. They are in high "fight drive" and are not thinking clearly when fighting. If someone grabs them they will bite without even thinking about who or what they are biting. This is how your loving pet can dog bite the living crap out of you in about a second and a half.

In reality it probably doesn't even know it's biting you. I compare it to a bar fight. If a person comes up behind 2 guys fighting and just reaches out and grabs the shoulder of one of the combatants most of the time the fighter is going to turn and throw a punch without even looking at who or what he is hitting. This is because his adrenaline is pumping and he is in "fight drive".

The worst case scenario is that you are alone when a serious fight breaks out. There are a couple things that you must keep in mind:

- Keep your cool you have a job to do.
- Do not waste time screaming at the dogs. It hardly ever works.
- Your goal is still the same; you must break up the fight without getting hurt.
- Go get a leash (allow the fight to continue while you do this).
- Dogs are almost always locked onto one another. Walk up and loop the leash around the back loin of the dog by either threading the leash through the handle or use the clip. I prefer the thread method.
- Now slowly back away and drag the dog to a fence or to an object that you can tie the leash to. By doing this, you effectively create an anchor for one of the dogs.
- Then walk around and grab the back legs of the second dog and drag it away from

the dog that is tied up. Remember to turn and circle as they release.

- Drag the dog into a dog pen or another room before you release the back legs.
- Go back and take the dog off the fence and put him or her into a dog kennel.
- Sit down and have a stiff drink (or two).

People talk about using cattle prods or shock collars to break up 2 pets that fight. I can tell you that many times this is not going to work. The electric cattle prod or electric collar will only put the dogs into higher fight drive. When they are shocked they will turn and bite the prod, or when they are shocked they will think the other dog is causing the pain and they will fight harder. An electric collar is best used in conditioning training, but not during an actual dogfight.

I had a friend tell me that using a stun gun works. Not to actually shock the dog, but just to hold it in your hand and allow it to snap. The sound of the electrical snap is supposed to cause the dogs to stop fighting. I will muzzle 2 of my dogs and let them go at it to see if this works. I will be surprised if it works on 2 really strong dogs going after each other.

Muzzles



Learn how to measure for your dog and pick the right muzzle.

A point I would like to make is that if you see two dogs out there squaring off through body posturing (i.e. one dog with stiff legs and tail straight up in the air putting his head over the shoulders of the other to show dominance) do not run out there screaming “NO NO NO!!!!” Most of the time this is going to trigger the fight. A lot of times dogs will posture and one will give in and back away. They settle their dominance issue without a battle. I NEVER, NEVER, NEVER recommend testing this situation. It’s not worth the fight that erupts if you are wrong. But I can tell you of a couple of situations at my kennel where I went outside and 2 males were loose that I would have thought would fight to the death. Obviously they determined that today is not the day to argue. I also know that had I gone out screaming before they settled it themselves there would have been a nasty fight.



Butch Crabtree got bit by his own dogs in his kitchen because he did not do things correctly.

If you have 2 dogs that you are trying to get to live together it is best to make them wear muzzles all the time. Try the [Jafco muzzles](#) I sell. They are not expensive but very effective for this work.

With muzzles on you can test your training and if the dogs become aggressive you can safely step in and correct the dogs. It is important to make sure the muzzles are properly fit and on securely. It is also a good idea to have the dogs wear 18-inch draglines.

When one of the dogs even acts like it is going to challenge the other dog you need to INSTANTLY get after that dog. You are the pack leader and pack leaders are the ones who determine when to fight or be aggressive.

If dogs continue to show aggression I will use a remote collar in it's training. I did a training DVD that teaches [REMOTE COLLAR TRAINING FOR PET OWNERS](#) With serious dog aggression a dog needs to receive high level stimulation for even looking at another dog. The key is for your timing to be for LOOKING and not for AGGRESSION. Many times by the time a dog has elevated to the point of aggression it will not react to a normal levels of stimulation.

People make mistakes with remote collars and dog aggression by starting at a low level of stimulation and then waiting until the dog is actually being aggressive to stimulate the dog. By that time the dog is so keyed up it will fight through the correction. With many dogs they learn how to take higher and higher levels of stimulation - where as had the owner used the highest level at first they can often quickly go to lower levels.

Dominant Dog Collar



Great for training!

Remember that females usually fight with females and males usually fight with males. It's seldom that a male and female will fight. When a male fights with a female it usually a very dominant male who is displaying his dominance over the female and she wants nothing to do with it. I have had to gas one of my stud dogs twice when he got into it with a female who did not want anything to do with him. This usually is going to happen with a dominant male who is very self confident, and thinks that he is the pack leader. You will also have males with strong sex drive go after a bitch that is not receptive to them.

The bottom line on dog fights is that unless you are trained it is best to never step into the middle of them. In the worst case, let them fight. It may result in death or severe injury to one of the dogs, but it's not worth the damage it could cause to you if you make a mistake trying to end the fight.

DOG BITES

A last word of warning. If your or someone you are with gets bitten and has to go to the emergency room, the most common treatment is to leave the dog bite wounds open so they can drain. They normally should not be stitched. The only time most doctors will stitch up a dog bite is if it's on the face. By closing the wound there is a much higher chance of infection. If the doctor

that you see wants to stitch normal puncture wounds, ask for a second opinion. Because of my experience with police dogs I knew better than to allow my hospital's physician's assistant to stitch my employee. I voiced my concern but she insisted on stitching. I should have asked for a doctor's opinion. The wounds got infected and we had him back in the emergency room (at a different hospital) 2 days later. They took the stitches out, inserted packing and put him on "IV's" with antibiotics.

A final note to this article. I have received a great many emails about dog fighting. Many were well meant with ideas of how to use a hose and squirt water on the dog etc., etc., etc. While I appreciate these thoughts, the methods are simply not going to work on the very hard, very tough, working dog.





I get a number of emails on dog fights. This is more of a common problem than one would think. You can read some of these below and there is a Q&A section on my web site about dog fights.

An email from a man who tried to break up a dog fight without knowing how to do it the right way:

How are you doing Ed? Been awhile since I got up with you. I have some dumb pictures of me stopping 2 dogs fighting. Pit and Shepard pit mix both females.

Wish I would have read your stuff about the best way to break up a fight. But I reacted and did not think. Almost got killed. Left upper inner part of the arm was bit to the muscle any further it would have hit the artery. Took 12 stitches. Normally they would not have stitched them as you had said but the bites where deep and torn so they opted to loose stitch to allow for drainage.

Have to say special thanks to Womack Army Hospital. After I was used as a chew toy, I had to walk about 1/2 mile to the vehicle. Btw these where not my dog or dogs. My grandchildren where a few feet away when this happened. My dog Scooter was retrieving at Mott lake Bragg. Long story.

If you want use these pictures to enforce Of Not What to Do! Do so. Might save some grief for another person. Guess I fell on my head to many times as an old paratrooper. Guess you know us Airborne troopers ain't wrapped to tight!

Just kidding. Give my best to Jeff I hear he is still a paratrooper at Ft Bragg. Just met a few troopers from his old unit.



This bite just missed an artery - it could have killed him





If you think breaking up a dog fight is not dangerous look at this - a photo of his armpit.

Basic Dog Obedience

The best way to eliminate dog fights is to never let them happen in the first place. This is accomplished by controlling the environment you take your dog too and then train your dog to mind under extreme distraction. If you cannot call your dog back when it is walking or running towards another dog then your dog is not fully trained.

Read the article I wrote on [DOG PARKS](#). If you are a new dog owner you need to learn why dog parks are a terrible idea and why they are a very dangerous place to take your dog.

Get my [4 hour DVD on Basic Dog Obedience](#) and learn how to train your dog.

Prong Collar



Great for training!

How to Fit a Prong Collar



eBook

Additional Articles Related to Dog Fights

- [Dealing with the Dominant Dog](#)
- [A List of Categories on Dominant and Aggressive Dogs](#) hundred of emails on aggressive dogs
- [A list of Leerburg DVD's, articles and products that deal with dominant and aggressive dogs](#)
- [I Identify Over 20 Different types of Dominance and Aggression - read HUNDREDS of emails from people with dominant and aggressive dog problems](#)
[These emails are separated by category.](#)
[This is serious business - educate yourself!!!](#)
- [Ground Work to Becoming a PACK LEADER](#)
- [The Theory Of Corrections in Dog Training](#)
- [Dog Packs](#)
- [Raising 2 Pups at the Same Time - Why it's a bad idea!!!](#)
- [My Dog is Dog Aggressive. How Can I stop this?](#)

- [Dog Fights and Questions on Dogs that are Animal Aggressive](#)
- [How to Deal with the Overly Aggressive Dog](#)
- [DOG PARKS - Why I Don't Think They are a Good Idea](#)
- [Introducing a New Dog Into a Home with Existing Dogs](#)
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- [Introducing Dogs \(or Puppies\) into Homes with Cats](#)
- [How to Break Up a Dog Fight Without Getting Hurt](#)
- [What Would I Do If Attacked by a Dog](#)
- [Using Breaker Bars in Dog Fights](#)
- [Chow's & Chow Mixes - know what you are buying!!!](#)
- [Court upholds use of Police K-9 force](#)
- [Directory of Information for Dominant Dogs](#)

- [Dog Fights and Questions on Dogs that are Animal Aggressive |](#)
- [Q&A's on Dog Fights](#)

Books on Behavioral Problems in Dogs:

- [Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training - Volume 1: Adaptation and Learning](#) by Steven R. Lindsay
- [Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training - Volume 2: Etiology and Assessment of Behavior Problems](#) by Steven R. Lindsay
- [Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training - Volume 3: Procedure and Protocols](#) by Steven R. Lindsay
- [Animals in Translations](#) by Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson
- [Fatal Dog Attacks](#) - By Karen Delise
- [Ruff Love](#) - By Susan Garrett

Emails From People

About Dog Fights

One email deserves mention - a man recently wrote this:

I write to tell you my “fun” method of separation when the fight is at home. A CO2 fire extinguisher. They are good to have around anyway. A combination of sound and the cold shot alone would be enough to break up the fight but when you add the effects of oxygen deprivation, the results are “breathtaking”. Give it a shot.

A dog fight is never pleasant, but I will have to admit to some small sense of satisfaction in letting them have it. Totally harmless when it was tried on me. And it worked every time on them. I bet you add it to your article when you see the results!

Dog Fight Email:

Hi Ed,

First off, I am extremely glad I found you and your training methods. It was by accident really. My 2 Portuguese Water Dog males had been fighting -- one 8 years old, the other 1.5 years. Of course I wanted to solve the fighting problem but what I

wanted right now was to be able to break up the dog fight without getting bit.

I Googled 'dogfights' and you popped up. BTW, the dog bite pictures on your site are scarier than anything I'd seen before-- I hadn't really thought about the reality of getting bit. Downloaded the "How to break up a dogfight" audio and my wife broke up another fight the very next morning while I was in the shower. She used your methods and didn't get bit and stopped the fight.

So naturally I ordered a few DVD's: Basic obedience and aggressive dogs. They are extremely thorough, clear and extremely practical. In addition to everything else, now I have a new and more educated appreciation for prongs and E collars.

Many thanks,
Matt

Pit Bull Kills our 10 Month Old German Shepherd

Although this happened a few weeks ago, I have only now been able to post this...

My 10-month-old GSD Chopper was brutally killed by a trained fighting pitbull around 7:30pm on March 20, 2006.

We were out for our usual nightly stroll, Chopper

was walking calmly beside my 8-month-old son's stroller as trained to do so. My son, Shane, and Chopper were the typical dynamic-duo. Shane crawled everywhere Chopper went, and they would even crash together on the floor mid-day. As we were walking past some hedges of a neighbor's home about 1/4 mile from my house, I heard the low rumble of a dog's growl. Instantly Chopper was on the alert. Hackles and tail up, a large pit bull charged out of the bushes, headed straight for the stroller. Chopper instantly placed himself between the pit and my son's stroller, and met the pit jaw-to-jaw. Chopper, being only 70lbs, was pushed down by the 90lb+ pit. I instantly knew I would have to act fast to save Chopper. I called my fiance, then 911 about the fight that was now raging. I moved my son's stroller out of the way, then (unwisely) began kicking and hitting the pit to try to knock him off of my dog. My fiance got there within a minute of my call, and he instantly jumped into the fight. The pit turned his attention from Chopper long enough to grab my fiance's hand and crush 4 bones.

In that second, I started thinking clearly. I knew in my car I had a gun, and I raced to the car, grabbed it, and put 2 rounds into the pit's skull. I am a dog lover, and felt horrible, but my first thought was to the safety of my family. I picked up Chopper's bleeding body, put him into my car, and raced him to the nearest emergency vet. My

fiance stayed with my son and the body of the pit until the police and fire rescue came moments later.

By the time I got Chopper to the vet, my back seat was soaked with his blood, his eyes were glazed and his coloring was pale. He sustained numerous bite wounds to the front legs (one was actually broken) but the worst was his neck. It was just literally ripped wide open. I knew he had no chance, so they put him to sleep in the back of my car, head on my lap, where he was most happy.

After arranging the cremation of his body, I returned home. The pit's body had been picked up by Animal Control, and they had located the owner through a microchip. The pit not only had the many wounds and signs of dog fighting, his bite record showed his aggression. He had seriously wounded a small baby just a few days earlier, AND the owner had just gotten out of jail for manslaughter.

Currently, I am filing every charge on the owner that I can. With a great lawyer, and a great relationship with the local PD, I hope to put the owner where he needs to STAY. I have a new puppy (whom I had already purchased before this attack) named Carbon Copy v. Borus, and my son has taken to him as he did to Chopper. All I have are my pictures and memories of Chopper. My son will only grow up hearing the story, never

actually remembering the dog that may have saved his life.

Sasah Hall

Here is an article that was sent to me from one of our customers. It is an example about how serious a dog fight can be and how quickly it can turn bad:

Dog shot after attack - CAPE COD TIMES
CATAUMET - Police shot and killed a dog after it bit a man and then attacked a police officer last night.

The police were called to Millennium Drive in Cataumet shortly after 9 p.m. because a 39-year-old man, the dog's owner, had been bitten. When police arrived, the dog, an Akita - a Japanese breed originally used for fighting - also attacked the police officer.

The man was reportedly trying to break up a fight between the Akita and another dog.

The officer was not injured, according to the Bourne police. The man was taken to Falmouth Hospital with a serious arm injury, according to Bourne fire officials. The injury was so serious police originally called it a possible amputation, according to fire officials. The police shot the dog after it attacked the officer.

(Published: October 13, 2006)

Dog Fight Email:

Ed,

Thank you so much reading my email. And thank you for all the great info on the Training CDs I have 4 of them with a lot of your toys and have learned so, so, so, so much from you. I have had dogs for 12 years and I have 5 of my own dogs now and I am the PACK LEADER only because of how you retrained me. I find that continually watching your videos is the only way to learn. I watch different CDs once a week for the last year. With you and Cesar M, I have been able to train my high level Jack Russell, Beagle, and low level cocker and 2 mini dachshunds, so everyone can all live, eat and play together.

The REAL question I have is ... My 20 year old daughter is marrying an Active Duty Air Force K9 Sgt. Ben adopted his old drug dog, Melvyn, who is 10 years old German Sheppard who quite working one day and Ben took him in to his home or the AF was going to put him down. Melvyn is a very high level dog and needs lots of exercise. He does listen to verbal orders and hand signals I have used. Melvyn is never aggressive with humans, but his aggressiveness to other dogs is extreme and I think could be from not enough exercise or a mission. My Daughter has asked me to help her work with the dog to get it to calm down and mind because she likes the

dog around for security while Ben is at work. She feels bad if he has to be put down but they are expected there first baby in June 07. Ben does work with him a little, but doesn't have time because of his commitment to working with current work dog.

I know you have never met this dog, but with your years of background of training Sch... can a military working dog that has been so active and aggressively trained, can this dog be a house dog/family dog? If I used your training course exercises, could this dog be retrained? Could I get the dog calmed down with your weight vest, pronged collar, etc. so that it could be around other calm dogs? Or will the aggression for dogs never be fixed because of the years of training? The AF kind of still owns the dog and he's kind of on loan and Ben can keep him for however long he wants to but once Ben doesn't want him any more they will have to put it down.

I really appreciate your time and suggestions in this situation. Would it be worth my time? Is it possible?

Also thank you for your great website.

Sylvia Oglesby, USAF Ret MSGT

Ed's Answer:

First I would like to thank you for your kind words.

I would rather provide you with some information and then let you determine if your son's wife and you can save this dog.

I wrote an article titled [PREVENTING DOG BITES IN CHILDREN](#). It's excellent and has some unique common sense ideas in it.

If this were my dog I would be working with a remote collar with this dog. I don't know if you have this DVD (I am not at the office to check records) but get [REMOTE COLLAR TRAINING FOR THE PET OWNER](#) I use a collar on my personal dog. If you are interested write me back and I will tell you what model.

My gut feeling is that once you have learned to train with a remote collar you will never go any other way.

I assume your son has a dog crate for this dog. If not he needs to get one. I hope you can work this out – I have owned dog aggressive dogs all my life. I have had less than a handful of fights because I control their environment and train the dogs. You will never take the fight out of them but you can control it.

Best Regards

Ed

Fire Extinguisher Stops Dog Fights

Hi Mr. Frawley,

Just wanted you to know that the suggestion to use a fire extinguisher to break up fights works GREAT. We had two aggressive dogs begin a fight, and my husband grabbed one dog and I the other, and we could NOT pull them apart. So I sprayed them with the fire extinguisher (10 lb. size). They turned loose of each other like magic and were not in the mood to continue. A 5 lb. or 2 1/2 lb. size would also have worked, because it did not take much. BE SURE TO USE the ABC kind of extinguisher -- the guy assured me that it could be sprayed into a person's face (if their hair were on fire) with no ill effects and it had no ill effects on my dogs...

THANKS FOR THE INFO!!!! We now have three 10 lb. extinguishers on the three levels of our house and one in each car. Who cares about fires, anyway!!

The guy at the place where I bought them also told me that they are legal to take into Canada & work great for personal protection (as you may know, they do not allow pepper spray or mace in Canada).

J. Huesemann

Ed's Comments on Fire Extinguishers and Dog Fights

I am glad this worked for you. I must be honest, two dog crates and training would be my advice. These dogs should not be together. You run the risk of neutralizing the dogs to the fire extinguisher if you use it too much

Ed

Dog Fight Email:

Hi my name is Melissa and I have a pitbull mix (female) 3 years, 2 yr old male full pitbull, and a 1 yr old female full pitbull and now we have a Rottweiler male who is about 2 years. My question is that the rotty is interested and excited to meet the other dogs however the 1 year old female pitbull doesn't want anything to do with him and try's to bite him and the Male pitbull doesn't like him. Is there anyway that these dogs are going to get along or what should I do?

Thanks for your help

Melissa

Answer:

You have a dog pack - this is not going to work. Find homes for one or two of these dogs. If you aren't, you had better be reading my article on

how to break up a dog fight. Odds are you are going to get dog bit. Chalk it up to a learning experience.

Dog Fight Email:

OK I have read the thing about [breaking up dogfights](#) and what do you do if you are in a situation when you and lets say your Rotty is out for a walk and a stray dog comes and a fight begins and there is no one there to help you break up this fight what do you do? When things are getting pretty nasty such as blood shed and etc...Please explain as this topic is not in the article for "breaking up dog fights."

Thank you,
Tameshia

Answer:

You carry a can of pepper spray. When the strange dog comes in for the fight, you spray in the eyes and nose.

Dog Fight Email:

I just finished reading your article on breaking up dogfights. I have a female friend that has two male dogs a Golden Retriever and a Samoyed that recently got into a serious fight. She mistakenly tried to break up the fight herself and went to the emergency room for very serious

hand and wrist gashes. These dogs love her very much, too. I agree with your advice on breaking up fights and would never try to break one up myself. I'm no wimp, but I know when I could get hurt! My husband and I recently purchased a male German Shepherd puppy from a local breeder and he is now nearly 4 months old. I have spent all day every day with him since he came home and use your suggestions and techniques with great results! He is a wonderful companion at such a young age and is responding to me extremely well. One more thing... I was happy to see you recommend carrying pepper spray when walking a dog in case of strays approaching and/or attacking. I have been carrying pepper spray for just such an occasion and have received some negative comments for it. The way I see it? If you can't beat 'em, spray 'em. Thanks for some great advice, and I love reading your articles.

Lisa Holzer
Lansing, Michigan

Dog Fight Email:

God bless you, Ed for a great article, and the only practical one I've ever read, on breaking up a GSD (or any strong dog) fight, especially about not getting in the middle. My right arm looks like the picture, with permanent nerve damage and tendon shortening from getting in the middle of a fight with 2 of my own dogs.

The dog that grabbed me had his head in a hold and when I broke that hold by prying open the other dog's jaw, the caught dog whipped around and grabbed me, torque savagely, realized immediately it was me and let me go, but the damage was done. There is no pain like a dog bite, I've been frost-bit, birth pains, broken bones, nothing compares. The second thing I was impressed with was your honesty that once the dogs are involved, damage will happen. But you cannot panic, scream or add to the fight frenzy, or it will intensify. Yes, pepper spray works, but in a dominant struggle between strong dogs, you absolutely have to get right in their face. I just recently used it for the first time, as my 18 mo male decided to take on my least dominant adult male. Friends had said all they had to do was give a little spray and their dogs immediately separated and laid down. This dog took 3 full hits in the face before he finally lessened his hold on the other dog, and I could get him to out. He immediately wanted to get back into the fray, but I had him at that point. So, yes, pepper spray helps if you are by yourself, but don't count on it totally.

Thanks for the advice on the muzzles. Another point to people, please watch where the end of your leash is.

Thanks again for the great article.

Rachel Anderson

Dog Fight Email:

Dear Ed,

Once I had the bad idea of going to a conformation show with 2 dogs that have never been in fight, they live together without problem, one more dominant than the other, and this last one is very "wolfie" so she accept the alpha roll of the first bitch and everybody is happier...

Until the day I took them to the show using a "SIAMESE CHAIN", that chain is manager with one leash, at the end it has two small "daughters chains" that allow you to manage 2 dogs with one leash... what a mistake!

Suddenly when they saw other dogs they got hyper, nervous and start to fight between them... the worst part is that since they were joined by a so small chain was impossible to separate them, the chain was so tense that no human force would be able to separate them..

I was trying and trying to separate them... no way, until one of them won over the other, a small fraction of time in relax and I was able to release the collars and chains...

Dogfights are something terrible. Never will I use one of those chains, 2 dogs on one leash... big error!

Thank you for your article, very helpful.
Javier Rodriguez
Lima, Peru

Dog Fight Email:

I want to tell you that my dogs are very passive and have never shown aggressive behavior - until this year. Keep in mind that these animals are my family, not just pets. They are truly loved and treated better than most of the kids in my neighborhood. They have a heated porch accessible when they are outside and air conditioning in the summer. They are "in bed" by 10:00 pm and are extremely healthy, according to my vet. That being said, their erratic, aggressive behavior started just recently.



My dog fights started on October 7, 2001 when "out of the blue" my youngest male mutt (Jaxson) and my male Brittany Spaniel (Cocoa) got into an all-out brawl. Being that this was the first time that any of my dogs got into a fight, I thought I

could easily break it up. I tried yelling, the water hose, pulling on tails, everything that first came to my mind and all attempts failed. Finally, I thought that if I grabbed the dog I was most familiar with - Cocoa, I could hold him high and run him into the house away from the other dog. I was able to separate dogs, but I didn't expect Jaxson to return and jump so high to get to Cocoa. The result was that he clamped onto my right arm, ripping the inside of my elbow to the bone. (See attached pictures).

I was relieved that Jaxson's canine teeth actually went between a tendon and an artery thus preventing any serious damage to my arm. (See CLOSEUP.JPG) The only residual effect was a scar to remind me of the incident.



Two nights ago, Cocoa went a little too close to Archie (my oldest dog - black lab, cocker spaniel mix) and Archie responded with aggressiveness.

They were clamped on each other so tight that I didn't know what to do. I ran and got the dog dish full of water and threw it on the two heads. That didn't help. I grabbed Archie by the tail - he didn't even notice. I then grabbed a blanket and threw it over the dogs' heads - they still did not loosen their grips. When I pulled the blanket off, one of the dogs turned and bit me on the leg - through my robe and left a scratch (albeit painful). At this point, I ran upstairs and collapsed on my bed because I was so tired and out of breath - to the point that I thought I was having heart failure. After about a minute of lying down, I went into the hallway to see Cocoa trying to get away - panting, and Archie going after him again. I threw Cocoa into the bedroom, shut the door, and again laid down on the bed completely exhausted.

After about 10 minutes, I was recovered enough to go and see the damage each dog did to each other. Remarkably, the damage was very minor. Cocoa was limping because of two minor wounds to his leg, and Archie only had a minor hematoma to his ear and a toe nail that was bleeding small amounts of blood. For the next two days, they licked their wounds, but showed no aggression towards each other.

Right now, they are sleeping next to each other on my bed as if nothing ever happened. I truly believe that Cocoa isn't the aggressor, rather the poor soul that is picked on by the other males.

I needed a solution to my problem and believe that your suggestion of the "leash tied around the leg" of one of the dogs MAY work if I can find a stationary object to attach it to - yes, it is only me here when the dogs fight.



I want to tell you after much research on the Web, I decided that I would like the stun guns available, just in case I can't succeed IF there is a next time. Many sites said that without permanently injuring the animal, a stun gun can temporarily cause the dogs to collapse allowing the owner to separate the dogs. In your web site, you typed:

I had a friend tell me that using a stun gun works. Not to actually shock the dog, but just to hold it in your hand and allow it to snap. The sound of the electrical snap is supposed to cause the dogs to stop fighting. I will muzzle 2 of my dogs and let them go at it to see if this works. I will be

surprised if it works on 2 really strong dogs going after each other.

My question: did you ever try using the stun gun near your dogs? Was it effective? From research on the Web, I learned that the stun gun will NOT kill the dogs (one site stunned two pigs and normal blood pressure and heart rate returned quickly). I ordered two 65,000 volt stun guns - the weakest guns available and will use them as an absolute last resort. I would be very interested in your follow-up to using the stun guns.

Feel free to use my story and pictures if you wish to prevent others from trying to separate fights when they don't know what they are doing.

Sincerely,
Tony LaPerna Jr.

Dog Fight Email:

I am glad I found your site. I have three American Bull dogs and today the female went right up to a 1 yr. old male and grabbed on to its neck and started shaking. I have only seen and stopped two prior dog fights by myself. This one was the worst. I didn't know any of your techniques yet and so I tried to choke out one dog (which has worked before) but to no avail. I then tried to get them into a doorway where I pushed the door shut in between them. It was the only thing I could think of. After reading your website I know

exactly what to do. I really appreciate your advice. I guess I always figured it was my job to break them up and I had to get in there or they would fight to the death. I am so thankful I only got a small cut on my finger, especially after seeing some of the pictures on the website!

Myndi Orr

Dog Fight Email:

Hi,

My son has a staffy cross, not sure what the cross is, but she is mainly staffy to look at. He had two dogs, the dog that was attached by the staffy was a border collie named Jess, she was 17 years old. Molly, the staffy, is 5 years old. They were alone in the house together, when Molly attacked and so severely injured Jess that she had to be put down. Molly must have thrown and shook her around. The injuries that Jess received were horrific, to her throat, her lung was punctured and the rib that would have covered her lung was missing. The vet also suspected her pelvis was fractured, and it was at this point that it was requested of the vet that he put Jess to sleep. She did not deserve to die this way nor for that matter, any dog/child etc.

Jess had always been a quiet, gentle dog, never showed any aggression to anyone.

My son asked me to try and find some

information on the internet relating to the above attack, and if you can to please give an opinion at to whether, his son, who will be turning two in June is in any danger from Molly. I know that perhaps you can't give me a direct answer at to whether Molly should be put down or not, but perhaps with letters that you have received there may have been similar experiences. Could Molly attack again now that she has been "blooded" so to speak? It's just very hard to know what to do, putting Molly to sleep won't bring Jess back to life, but by the same token if Molly should attack again, how does one forgive one's self for giving her a second chance?

And that is why I'm emailing you, as my son, and myself included, just don't know what is the best way to deal with this situation. I hope to hear from you soon.

Regards,
Shirley

Answer:

I feel badly for you and this poor dog. Can you imagine what the last minutes of life were like for this very old dog? To end 17 years of life in this way is a terrible thought.

I will guarantee you that it is not a matter of "IF" this dog will fight- it's only a matter of time and "WHEN" it will happen again.

Dogs like this need to be totally isolated from other dogs. They can never come into contact with animals. This needs to be accomplished by keeping them in secure dog kennels, secure dog crates and through the use of very solid dog training that results in the dog being 100% under control even in the face of the most severe distraction (i.e. another dog that is challenging it).

Read the article I have written titled [DEALING WITH THE DOMINANT DOG](#). You can find this article in the list of [training articles](#) on my web site. I believe you will find the answers you need in that article or in the [Q&A section](#) of my web site. There are simple solutions to these problems. The question is if you are willing to do the work necessary to make the changes that will fix the problems.

A dog like this needs to be trained with an electric collar. I use a [DOGTRA 1200NC](#).

If you would like to learn more about the principles of obedience training a dog, read the description for my [Basic Dog Obedience video](#). You will probably find that you have not had a clear understanding of the steps of training a dog must go through before it can be considered fully trained. You can also read why I am not a fan of taking an untrained dog to obedience classes. I think if you read the testimonials on that tape you will see that my customers feel the same way.

Dog Fight Email:

I do realize most of this was probably my fault. But here are my stories.

I work at a Board and Train kennel that usually houses 12-20 dogs at a time. I was working at the main branch, walking a Dalmatian that was good with some of the other dogs, but tended to have an aggressive streak in him too.

We were walking down the long driveway (a German shepherd lives across the street who I've always seen on a cable) as we were coming down, I heard a snap and looked up. I saw a large German shepherd come barreling towards us. My first thought was, "Shield the dog." So I pulled Jack around to my back and the German shepherd didn't make a sound as he lunged towards Jack.

I was lucky this time, my reflexes kicked in and I scruffed the German shepherd, had Jack by the collar and was literally using my strength to keep them apart as I screamed for help. The owners of the German shepherd came out and pulled the dog away. The next day, the dog was back on its tie out cable.

The next fight I witnessed was definitely my fault. Again, at the same kennel, I had a pit bull mix female in the office that is adjacent to the crate room. I was walking an old lab to his crate

when I saw the pit bull open the door. She made a beeline to the cats, but when she realized they were up out of reach, she turned, saw the Lab and tore after him, she tried to go for the throat but I kneed her off. She went for the stomach and clamped on, shaking the lab until his skin split. I reached right into the pile, grabbed the pit bull by the skin and hung her up until she let go, threw her a few feet away, then I shoved the lab into the open crate nearest to us. I put the pit bull into another crate and then pulled the lab out to tend to his wounds. He had to have 3 drains put in and his stomach was swollen and dripping pus for a week.

My third fight was between a Great Pyrenees and a very male golden retriever. The golden was outside in the dog yard and I was at the gate with the Pyrenees. I knew the golden was inside but I unlatched the gate and stepped inside with the Pyrenees. Indy (the golden) came over and I didn't see a change in behavior. Tank decided to sniff Indy and Indy just went after him. Again... I was all alone and Indy was into it and Tank was just trying to get away. So I opened the latch, I urged Tank outside and when Indy, on Tank's back, tried to follow, I grabbed Indy by the skin on his back, picked up his back leg and when he went in for a re-bite, I tore him off and threw him across the yard. Of course, as soon as I went outside, Tank was tearing across the lawn into the street. Tank wasn't hurt, thankfully. I'm glad he just decided to run away rather than fight back.

I realize I've been lucky so far in having to break up fights, and I always bring pepper spray with me. But I hope there is never a time where I have to reach between two dogs when both teeth are flying.

I loved your article and maybe that will help in the future. But I know for new handlers, they tell me that they are so panicked, that they can't think.

H. Sevilla
Search and Rescue Handler, CA

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Portland Man Attacked By Own Dog:

05:56 PM PDT on Friday, September 16, 2005

By ANTONIA GIEDWOYN, kgw.com Staff

Animal control officers seize one of the two rottweilers.

A man was attacked by his own dog in southeast Portland on Friday afternoon and had to be hospitalized, police said.

The man was mauled by one of his two rottweilers when he tried to separate the fighting dogs in his backyard in the 11700 block of SE Washington St. shortly after noon, said Sgt. Brian Schamutz.

The man's girlfriend and a neighbor hit the attack dog with a sledgehammer and machete to stop the attack and then called 9-1-1.

Preliminary reports indicated the man lost a lot of blood. He was transported to Oregon Health &

Science University Hospital, where he underwent surgery.

Medics said the victim suffered injuries to his arm, neck and shoulder.

His name was not immediately released by authorities.

Meantime, animal control officers seized the two.

Dog Fight Email:

Thank you so much for the article on breaking up dog fights and on dog parks.

I live in New York and have owned dogs for 10 years. I know that you do not reach in between two dogs that are fighting. And I know the dog runs are dangerous places. But living in New York City with an active Miniature Poodle and sometimes means using it to run off excess energy. Today, however, was different. My 13 pound poodle got attacked by a full male Pit Bull. My dog, Bailey was in a tussle with another dog over a ball, and the PB was all the way on the other side of the run. We had all been there about 15 minutes with no problems. But I guess the PB got triggered and ran over and attacked the hell out of my dog. I could only stand and watch, knowing there was nothing I could do.

The owner of the PB reached in to pull his dog off and I got mine out from under the PB. Then the

man started yelling at me for “turning my back on my dog” and how “you should always reach in and pull on the dog’s tail”. I told him, no, you cannot. Then I thanked him for pulling his dog off of him, that my dog seemed okay. He kept yelling and then pulled his arm from behind his back. His dog had shredded it. Much worse than the pictures on your website. He was, I think, angrier (and in a lot of pain) at himself than at me.

I took my dog to the vet. My dog did not go unscathed. I did not know that PB have tiny teeth that do not tear, but leave small puncture wounds that are hard to find. PB injuries are usually internal. My dog, when they shaved him, had bites over his back, head and under his tail. He has intense bruising in those areas too. The vet says the next 48 hours are crucial in determining any internal damage- but I am deeply concerned about the long term psychological scarring.

I have been beating myself up saying “What more could I have done?”

But, honestly, I was prepared in that moment, that my dog was dead. I have seen PB fight before and I know there IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO. You have given me back some hope that if I carry pepper spray I may have a chance. However, prevention is the best cure, so no more dogs run for me and Bailey.

Thanks for your information. And thanks for reading this.

Carolyn

Dog Fight Email:

Dear Sir,

One of our Great Dane bitches has become very aggressive toward our Irish Setter bitch who has no nasty bone in her body. The setter has been very submissive toward the Dane. This over aggressive behavior of the Dane is very new.

My husband's way to break up a fight is to stab at the offender with a steak knife, which when I found out I became very upset with him. I live in a wheel chair and when the most recent fight started, I tried my stopping the fight by getting my overly large wheel chair in the middle. It did slow down the attack somewhat, but then the Dane managed to get around me and started attacking the setter with more anger. I finally noticed a spray bottle of Lysol, I sprayed the Dane with it and she finally backed off. It didn't last long because the setter got into her head to retaliate. I had my cane in my hand and I was able to block them off of each other. My husband was just coming into the house and saw what was going on, I yelled to him to grab the setter and put her outside and then I would put the Dane in the basement. When we brought the setter back

in, she was bleeding, limping, whining, panting and then collapsing on the floor.

We were afraid that her leg was broken and her lungs my have been involved. We took her to the vet, ha let us know that nothing was broken but there were plenty of rips, tares and punctures. She put our setter on a heavy duty pain killer, an antibiotic and a light tranquilizer. She also suggested that we find the Dane a new home or this behavior next time may kill our setter. My husband said "In a cold day in hell"

So here we are, fighting about the best thing to do with the Dane, to muzzle her or not, and to keep them separate them. I thought the best thing to do is to find a new home for the Dane where she would be the only dog.
Please send me your thoughts ASAP!

Sincerely,
Deby Celler

Ed's Answer on the Dog Fight Email:

Stabbing the dogs in a dog fight is over the top as far as an acceptable method to deal with the problem of dog fights. It's crazy.

Get two dog crates and use them. Only allow one dog out at one time. This is not rocket science.

Train these dogs:

Get my DVDs [Basic Dog Obedience](#) and [DEALING](#)

WITH DOMINANT AND AGGRESSIVE DOGS. You need this information.

When I talk to disabled people I ALWAYS RECOMMEND training with a REMOTE COLLAR (electric collar) Here is a DVD I recently finished that teaches people who to do this; E-COLLAR TRAINING FOR THE PET OWNER

Hello ED,

My name is Raechel and I came upon this site today after trying to break up yet another dog fight in the house. After reading all the information on properly breaking up a dog fight I realize I did everything wrong. Which would be why I have a nice size bite on my arm. My question is about the two dogs. I recently got a 5 month old male black lab who for the most part is very gentle besides the puppy energy. My roommate has a 2yr old female Border Collie who is not fully trained. She is a very shy dog and will lay on her back when you walk up to her. Neither dog is aggressive by themselves and are fine together everyday. However this is the second fight in a week. The female Border Collie starts it. I was reading through the scenarios on why dogs fight and it said it wasn't common for a male and female to fight much less for the female to start it. The lab is still a puppy (a 35lb puppy) and, after seeing these two fights and pulling her off of him, is not very good at defending himself. I saw

that muzzles were recommended for introducing a new dog into the home. Is this always a good idea? Are there any cons to using them? How often should they be used?

Any help would be appreciated

Thanks
Raechel



A picture of Rachel's arm bite that she got trying to break up her dog fight. That's a quarter on her arm so you see how big this bite was.

My two dogs were almost attacked by a stray dog this morning. What should I do?

I was walking my 2 terriers this morning when a brown lab mix began to follow me. My terriers became excited and as the dog moved closer (I kept walking) I realized the stray was circling us. After only a hundred feet or so, I turned around and decided to head back toward home. The

stray followed. The intensity was rising and I knew I was in a potentially dangerous situation.

My doorway is an alcove and before I knew it I realized my small dogs and I were cornered. The stray began to growl and show his teeth - my dogs responded to that and I couldn't get in my house as the dog kept moving in front of the door. My hands were full with the 2 separate plastic retractable leads (that are in the trash can now). My neighbor heard the commotion - and by now there was a lot of it -and ran out to help. She called to the stray who ran to her immediately and I unlocked my door and ran inside with my dogs. Animal control was called.

Now this dog was very passive to my neighbor - followed her commands and sat on her lawn waiting for Animal Control.

What did I do wrong? What can I do to protect myself in the future? I was very frightened by this - and I'm sure the dog picked up on this fear. Am I over the top in thinking I should have some form of mace or pepper spray in my pocket? I would appreciate your help and suggestions.

Barbara Wright

Ed's Answer:

Well your dogs are not trained. You should have been able to put both dogs in a down stay while you stepped in front of them to protect them.

You should have screamed at the dogs to GO HOME. You should carry pepper sprays and use it on any dog that comes near your dogs – even if the other dog is with an owner who cannot control his dog.

You are supposed to be the pack leader – pack leaders protect lower ranking pack members. Your dogs EXPECT this. If you don't do it then one of them has to. When that happens, you lose any respect they had for you. They can love you and not respect you.

So train your dogs – with a prong collar or dominant dog collar <http://leerburg.com/746.htm> - here is a DVD to help - <http://leerburg.com/302.htm>

You are very lucky – you could have had a dead dog.

Regards,
Ed

Dog Fight Email:

Mr. Frawley,
First of all, thank you for your helpful information that you offer up for us! A little history, we have owned a female/spayed English Bulldog for 6 years. We fell hard for this breed and last year decided to add a male English Bulldog puppy. We got him at 12 weeks and did get him neutered

when the age was right for it. Tootsie, our female, seemed to enjoy his company and all has been well aside from slight jealousy at times on her part. Tyson, is now 1 year old and is her size. The past month has been hellish to say the least! He is definitely testing her for the leadership role, and she isn't budging to give it up. We are not encountering daily fights that have led to open wounds with lots of blood! These fights are generally triggered by toys. They are crate trained and have been side by side, and I have separated the crates across the room from each other. I have brought up every toy in the house, which seems unfair to our female as she is accustomed to playing with her toys/bones when she feels like it, but is necessary. In the past, if Tyson finds a toy, he will immediately take it into his crate and "guard" it for hours, with his ears back. He will even growl at us if we come near his crate if he has something in it. He has tried to bite at us if we remove something such as his empty food dish from his crate when he is finished eating. During the fights, he gets so pumped up, that after carefully breaking them apart by pulling on their collars, he is still for approx. 10 minutes trying to lunge back after her, ready to go after her again and again. She seems to get over it quickly. They do not sleep on our bed, or in our bedrooms. As far as training, we have failed drastically in this area. I feel we are completely to blame for his actions. At this point, my husband is ready to find him a home where he can be an

only dog. I talked to a dog trainer that gave me a small chance of this problem being solved, and yet another that told me that if I can teach the dogs to recognize that my husband and I are the pack leaders, not either of them, then maybe we stand a chance. What is your opinion on this? I love my little guy, but I know he isn't happy and he looks at me with this helpless look like he doesn't know how to stop what he is doing! Thanks so much in advance for your time and advice, it's appreciated greatly!

Lisa Troost

Ed's Answer on Dog Fights:

This comes down to an owner education issue. You need to change the way you live with these dogs. I have owned more aggressive dogs than I can remember. We would NEVER allow them to be together like this. We would also address pack structure and obedience training. Check out these videos for more information:

[Basic Dog Obedience](#)

[Dealing with Dominant and Aggressive Dogs](#)

Good luck

Ed

Dog Fight Email:

Dear Ed,

I wanted to thank you for publishing the advice for breaking up a dogfight when one is alone. Today my two male Rottweilers from serious working lines got into a fight when my husband was at work & I was alone. I am experienced in separating dogs by the hind legs but it never dawned on me to tie one of them. I basically tried every useless thing while these dogs fought to exhaustion and were finally tired enough to hear me say "Aus". I could have saved a lot of trauma had I read your article first.

Thank you so much for giving us this free information. If it ever happens again, I'll be ready.

Lesli Ventimiglia
Brego Rottweilers

Where To Go From Here

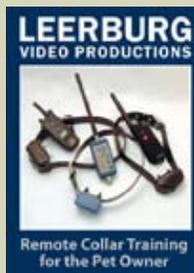
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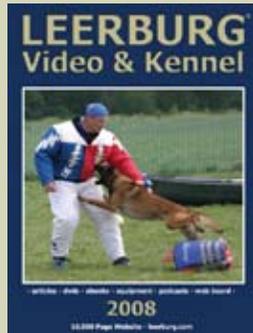
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