

What is Littermate Syndrome?

Littermate Syndrome is a non-scientific anecdotal term that refers to a number of behavioral issues that can happen when canine siblings (aka littermates) are raised in the same household after 8- to 10-weeks old.

While it may seem like a great idea to bring home two puppies (littermates or otherwise) at the same time, most professional trainers and reputable organizations strongly advise against this. Two puppies at once does not reduce the amount of training time you'll spend or help in raising them. Imagine the responsibility of a new baby versus the responsibility of twins—the same applies here.

In reality, adopting two puppies at once doubles the workload. Each puppy has its own personality, with different learning levels, strengths, weaknesses and preferences. New owners need to focus greatly on a puppy's individuality and development, which becomes more difficult when attempting to work with multiple puppies.

Adopting two puppies together also affects their social and emotional development. Not only do puppies have a constant distraction – another puppy – that often prohibits and slows their learning process, but they can become codependent, and shy about interactions with other puppies or dogs. Shy puppies can become withdrawn or introverted, leading to a wide variety of behavioral concerns, including anxiety or separation anxiety.

More than being unable to socialize with other dogs, a strong canine bond between puppies inhibits other social interactions. As they grow, the puppies may have a harder time bonding with humans or other animals outside their established "pack." A more serious outcome can take place as puppies mature. Two dogs may vie for the alpha role and begin fighting, which can become incessant and difficult to remedy.

While this is certainly not the case with all siblings, Saving Grace hopes to provide all our adopters and dogs with a positive adoption experience and the best chance for a successful dog-human bond. As a result of the many potential issues that may arise from sibling adoption, Saving Grace does not adopt littermates and strongly advises against the adoption of more than one puppy at a time.