

# Separate But Equal?

By Nancy Secrist, Easdale: the best pet care

**M**y two dogs are used to sleeping together at home. Can they board together? We answer, yes, but boarding together is only available to guests from one family. Here at Easdale we never combine dogs that are strangers to each other. We are known for individual care and attention to our guests! Many indoor areas are large enough to comfortably fit multiple dogs--depending on their size, of course. These lead directly to outdoor exercise areas dedicated just to their use during their stay plus a la carte activities. But at a seminar I attended, the speaker mentioned that it's not about the real estate, it's about the care when it comes to pets! There are more considerations to keep in mind than just square footage. Safety and excellent care are based on three areas: tracking food and water consumption, the effect of higher levels of excitement than at home, and monitoring signs of healthy digestion.

Normal eating and drinking are so very important, especially in the warmer weather. When two dogs of the same family are together, we cannot tell if one might be hanging back, not drinking or eating as much as the other. This is much more likely in "odd couples" such as an elderly pet with a young one, very large and very small roomies, or even just one very outgoing extrovert and the quieter introvert. If one is on medication or a special diet, we need to be sure each gets what they need. With side-by-side accommodations, they see each other but have some space to eat at their own pace.



Caring for pets requires an extensive knowledge of canine behavior. One little known fact is that higher levels of excitement can lead to a "redirect"--meaning that if your pets have ever shown aggression to other dogs, the excitement of seeing a dog going by outside their area may cause them to fight with each other. Like the scene in a bar fight where the punches are being thrown and somebody hits their friend, it's just wrong place, wrong time. If we sense there is a potential issue, we reserve the right to separate for safety.

Lastly, especially with first time visitors, individual observation of our guests is very important. Not to be too delicate, but for example, an abnormal stool can be signs of an upset stomach. It is quite common to see newly arrived pets who throw up items, sometimes of a very personal nature to the owners, that they ingested at home before they checked in. In some cases, these pieces of clothing or other items could be serious, even fatal, if not detected early. Dogs do eat the craziest things!

We have boarded as many as five Italian Greyhounds, four Poodles, three Shelties and two Labradors together from various families. We still haven't had a partridge in a pear tree!

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