
The Prairie Wheaten

Are Two Wheatens

Better Than One ?

(One Year Later)

by Jim and Trina Fallows

A year ago, we wrote about our experiences in bringing a second Wheaten terrier into our house (see Vol. 8 No.2 Fall 2002). The incumbent dog (Fergus) was a 4 year old male. The new dog (Molly), was a female puppy.

Despite the obvious size difference, the arrival of Molly was a very traumatic experience for Fergus. He had been a shy puppy (by Wheaten standards!), and had clearly become accustomed to having the run of the house. Our mild mannered gentleman struggled to handle the self-confident tornado that had invaded his space.

The purpose of this article is to provide an update of our progress in handling the difficulties that we presented in last year's article. In general, most of the problems have been overcome, though the process of resolution was longer and different than what we had initially expected.

To summarize last year's article, we prepared for the arrival of Our second Wheaten by:

- selecting a puppy of the opposite gender than our incumbent dog;
- attempting to match the temperament of the puppy to the temperament of the incumbent dog; and
- introducing the puppy to the incumbent dog (twice!) on neutral ground prior to bringing the puppy home.

Despite these preparations, we had the following experiences in the first two months following the puppy's arrival:

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realized their sleeping arrangement, and he made a beeline for his crate.

The dogs have continued to progress, and each month they seem to grow a little closer. Fergus has come to realize that Molly is "all talk and no action", so that he has little to fear from her barking and running. Molly no longer views Fergus as a threat to her position in the household. She rarely tries to steal his food (except for special treats), as she knows that there is always enough to go around. They follow one another out to their dog run, so they appear to get some enjoyment from being around one another.

Other parts of their relationship never carried together. Molly will not allow Fergus to chew a bone or play with a toy in her presence. Fergus will sometimes try to pick up a stray toy or bone (there are usually a dozen or so strewn around the house at any given time), however Molly will immediately demand that Fergus give it to her, and he always does. As a result, Fergus receives his own playtime every day (e.g., when Molly has gone out to the dog run alone) so that he can continue to enjoy chewing bones or playing with toys.

The key lesson that we learned from our experience is that bringing a second Wheaten into your home is at least as much work as the first one. All the normal "joys" of toilet training a puppy still apply, and you must pay attention to the relationship between the puppy and your other dog. The two dogs will bond to at least some extent, but it may take a significant amount of time (6 months or more), and it may take some intervention on your behalf to make it happen!



- Fergus would run away whenever the puppy was loose;

-Fergus twice urinated on furniture to mark his turf;

-the dogs never played together, and generally avoided one another; and-Molly appropriated all of the dog toys in the house for herself, regardless of whether they had originally belonged to Fergus.

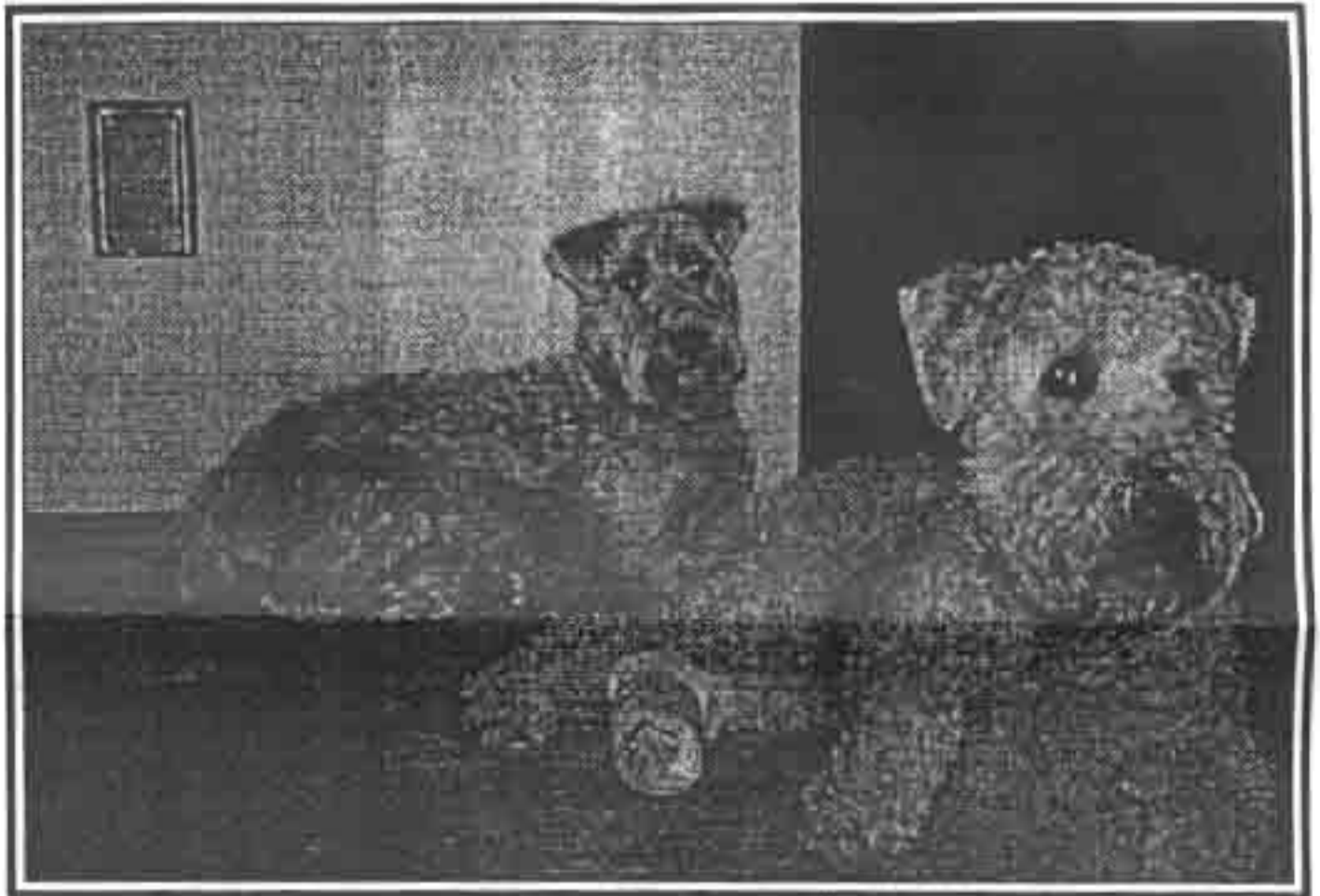
Clearly, the relationship between the dogs was not going well, and it went beyond an initial unfamiliarity and uneasiness. We did a bit of research on the problem, but everything that we read advised us to not interfere in the dogs' relationship, and that they would establish their own natural pecking order.

By November 2002, the puppy had been in the house for four months, and we decided that we had to do something to change the behavior of the dogs. We contacted Barb Lloyd from the Dogs Den Training School in Regina, and she agreed to come to our home and observe the interaction between the dogs. This proved to be the turning point!

Barb explained that you should normally allow dogs to sort out their own pecking order, however the relationship between two dogs can sometimes be dysfunctional, and it can be helpful in such cases for humans to intercede.

Specifically, she recommended that we reprimand Molly whenever she was unnecessarily bullying Fergus. Barb's theory was that Fergus would gain self-confidence in his relationship with Molly if he could see that we would support him in difficult situations.

The relationship between the two dogs began to change immediately, and Fergus soon became comfortable being in the same room as the puppy, particularly if humans were present. The attached picture captured an amusing incident from New Year's Eve 2002. Fergus had fallen asleep on a couch, and unbeknownst to him, the puppy had clambered onto the couch and had fallen asleep at his feet. There they remained for about 30 minutes until we took the photograph, which awakened Fergus. The poor guy immediately went wide-eyed with fear as he



Molly and Fergus

