

HSCC Dog Meet & Greet FAQ: Understanding Our Dog-to-Dog Introduction Process

At HSCC, we understand how important it is to ensure that dogs are comfortable and safe when meeting potential new canine companions. Below you'll find answers to common questions about our dog-to-dog meet process.

Why do you have a structured introduction process?

Dog-to-dog introductions can be complex, especially in a shelter environment where stress levels tend to be higher. Our 3-step protocol is designed to:

- ✓ Ensure the safety of both dogs and handlers
- ✓ Allow dogs to meet in a way that reduces stress
- ✓ Help us observe body language and behavior to make informed adoption decisions

What are the steps of a dog-to-dog meet?

Our 3-step dog introduction process includes:

1. Fence Greeting
 - Dogs greet each other with a fence between them.
 - We look for positive signs like sniffing and then disengaging easily.
 - *This helps us rule out any “red flag” body language that may suggest a high risk of aggression.*
2. On-Leash Greeting
 - If the fence greeting goes well, we move to a short on-leash introduction.
 - Handlers maintain loose leashes to avoid adding tension.
 - Ideally, the dogs sniff, show calm interest, and either begin to play or disengage smoothly.
3. Off-Leash Interaction
 - If the leash greeting is positive, we drop the leashes as soon as it's safe.
 - This gives the dogs the freedom to move naturally and reduces leash frustration.
 - We look for loose, wiggly body language, reciprocal play, and the ability to take breaks or disengage when needed.

What happens if the dogs don't get along?

We do not force dogs to interact. If either dog shows clear signs of fear, distress, or potential aggression, we end the interaction immediately. Depending on the situation, we may:

- Try a second introduction during the same visit with a different structure, such as a parallel walk
- Recommend scheduling another meet at a different time

In repeat meetings, we're looking for increased comfort and positive interaction.

Do you record the dog meets?

Yes. We ask for consent to video-record dog-to-dog introductions. This helps our trained staff:

- Review interactions if needed
- Better understand a given dog's behavior
- Support safe and successful adoption matches

Who conducts the dog introductions?

All dog meets are facilitated by shelter staff trained in dog behavior and dog-to-dog introductions. Our team is skilled in reading dog body language, de-escalating situations, and ensuring that all interactions are as stress-free and positive as possible.

What if my dog is shy or reactive?

Every dog is different, and we take each individual dog's behavior into account. If your dog is showing signs of fear or is not ready to engage, we will:

- Respect their space
- Avoid forcing interaction
- Work with you to determine the best next steps, which may include scheduling a future meet