

## **MUST A DOG LIKE EVERY DOG HE MEETS?**

By Nicole Wilde

As a trainer, I've received calls like this more than once: "Buddy's a great dog, he's sweet, he loves people, and he likes most other dogs. He even plays with them at the park. But there's this one neighborhood dog he just doesn't like. Can you help?"

Sure, that one dog can present a problem if the dogs have to pass each other every day on walks or if, for example, the dogs are in the same group class. And yes, a trainer can help the owner to manage the situation so the dogs can co-exist. But the deeper issue is the belief so many people hold that their dogs must like every dog they meet. Do you like every person you meet? I doubt it, and I doubt there's a person on the planet who does.

Consider this: maybe there's something about the other dog that most certainly should give other dogs pause. The dog might actually be aggressive or dangerous, but because he's not showing obvious-to-humans body language or social signals at the time, we don't pick up on it. But other dogs do. The point is, assuming your dog likes most dogs, it's perfectly natural and fine for him not to like a particular individual. Of course, it's not okay for him to act aggressively toward that dog, but if he appears anxious or frightened, shows avoidance behaviors, or becomes reactive, he shouldn't be forced to be around the dog any more than you should be forced to be around a person you don't particularly care for. And by the way, everything I've just said about other dogs applies to other people as well. (Heck, back in my dating days my dog had an uncanny ability to know which boyfriends I should ditch—unfortunately, it took me a bit longer to figure out.) So observe your dog's reactions and let him make certain social decisions—he just might have very good reasons.