

## Should You Sleep With Your Dog?

*There is much written by experts that suggests that allowing your dog in your bed sends mixed messages, that it lowers your pack status, that a dog who shares a bed considers himself an equal on the pack pole.*

*On the other hand, plenty of non-experts report that their dogs slept with them for years without a hitch.*

### **Here's my opinion: it depends on the dog and the human.**

If you have a healthy working relationship with your dog based on mutual trust and respect and you don't mind waking up with a dog's tail in your face or paws braced against your back, by all means, sleep with your well-adjusted dog - under the covers if you want!

It's not the well-adjusted, respectful dogs who should be banished, but the ones who don't see the humans in their lives as leaders, dogs who would dare talk back or bite you, in (or out of) the bed, who don't belong there. I think it's a shame that great dogs who don't need to be banished are punished for the ones who can't handle it.

### **The bed doesn't cause the problem, but it can certainly magnify a problem that is already there.**

If you are having difficulties with your relationship with your dog, if he is bossy, bratty and disrespectful, then he should not be in your bed at night. The dog who steals sandwiches from your child's hand and knocks him over in doorways shouldn't share your child's pillow, even if he would be fine sharing yours. Puppies should learn how to sleep alone so they don't grow up clingy and co-dependent or develop the mistaken impression that the bed is a right not a privilege. Dog behavior specialists like Dr. Ian Dunbar, PhD and British behaviorist John Rogerson quote horrifying statistics that the most severe bites to dog owners occur in the owner's bed. Dogs who would take advantage of their owners when standing upright will certainly take more advantage when their owners are prone. A bossy dog who thinks it's HIS bed and he's sharing his space with you, might also think he has the right to correct you for bumping his highness in the bed, with dire consequences. If your dog thinks he runs your house, get professional help for that issue. It's not "The Bed" that is the real problem - it's just a symptom of a more serious issue: an unhealthy relationship.

### **Velcro-dogs may not be good candidates for bed sharing.**

If your dog is clingy and co-dependent, if he suffers from separation anxiety, he should not be in your bed. A dog who suffers great stress when you are away needs to practice feeling secure when not in your direct presence. If he is your ever-present shadow, whining because you are on the other side of a shower door, he needs to learn to be ok with separation. Sleeping plastered against you all night only feeds this co-dependence. Night time is a great time for him to practice feeling secure with you out of reach.

### **Some good guide lines:**

- Evaluate your relationship. Are you a good leader? Is your dog emotionally secure?
- Your dog should wait for permission and sleep where you tell him to.
- If you have to be careful to avoid disturbing his highness in bed for fear of eliciting a growl or a bite, boot him out of the whole room, not just the bed, and get help from a behavior professional.