

## Training Your Puppy

Puppies are extremely impressionable. How you train, play, and behave around your puppy will have long lasting effects. The first 14 weeks of your puppy's life will impact him for his whole life. You can make him a better pet and prevent many behavior problems by following a few guidelines. These guidelines include, but are not limited to the following:

### Housebreaking:

Establish a routine. Keep your puppy's meals regularly scheduled to encourage predictable elimination patterns. Take him out frequently (ie. every two hours) during the day and as needed at night. Select one toilet area. Take him to the toilet area five minutes after doing anything (ie. feeding, awakening, riding in a car, greeting new people, or chewing on toys.) Immediately reward him with a food treat and verbal praise when he relieves himself in the appropriate place. Use a verbal command such as "go potty" when you take him to the elimination area. Do not play with your puppy until he does his business. Supervise your puppy. Accident prevention requires constant supervision. Watch for any signals that the puppy has to eliminate. Signals may include circling, whining, and sniffing around. Supervision will allow you to catch and interrupt an accident before it happens. When you interrupt your puppy it is important to take him to the toilet area immediately. Crate your puppy. Using a dog crate when you are unable to monitor your puppy will help. Crate training prevents accidents in the house when you are unable to interrupt the behavior. Most dogs will not soil where they sleep, making the crate a helpful tool in teaching the puppy how to "hold it" until the next walk.

### Socialization:

Puppies are naturally very curious about their surroundings. This curiosity helps them in developing proper socialization. The most important part of your puppy's learning takes place between 3 and 14 weeks of age. During this time it becomes important to introduce your puppy to a variety of positive experiences. *After the initial vaccination series is completed* you should try to visit three new places each week, and introduce the puppy to five new people at each place. Take him in regular car rides, visit local pet stores, and go to your veterinarian's office for a "happy visit". Take care that he has a good experience with all new situations. Show the puppy the kinds of things he will encounter during his adult life. Enroll in puppy kindergarten classes or basic obedience classes to help continue the socialization process. Another part of socialization includes getting the puppy used to touch, loud noises, collars, leashes, and grooming tools. Brush your puppy daily and massage him all over. Handle his feet and ears and open his mouth for inspection. If the puppy fusses, say "no" firmly. Talk to him in a soft, pleasant voice when he is quiet and being good. Gradually acquaint him to loud noises, like that of a vacuum cleaner. During play time you may even practice removing bones and toys from his mouth keeping a positive attitude if the puppy does well.

## **Prevent Bad Habits:**

Provide appropriate objects for chewing (i.e. NYLA-BONE and KONG products) and praise him for chewing on these objects. It is best to rotate toys to prevent boredom. Gently interrupt inappropriate chewing (clap hands, shout) while directing him to appropriate objects. Praise the puppy once he has started to play with an appropriate toy. Put your puppy in a crate when you are unable to supervise. Crate training will provide a safe environment, prevent unwanted behavior, and give the puppy a safe place of his own. Avoid aggressive behaviors such as mouthing hands, tug-of-war, jumping, growling, guarding food, and nipping. Competition between dog and owner should never be encouraged, even when it is playful. To handle aggressive play, stand perfectly still and cross your arms indicating that you are not interested in playing "rough." If the puppy persists, simply walk away. When he gives up, go and get an appropriate toy and praise him for playing with it. Jumping up is a common behavior which should not be allowed. Never pet or talk sweetly to a dog that has only two feet on the ground. Turn away and ignore him! If the dog knows how to "sit" on cue, then ask him to sit. This will give you a chance to stop the jumping and praise him for keeping all four paws on the floor. When your dog comes to you, or anyone else for attention, the dog should sit first, then get petted. Kneeing, hitting him under the chin, or squeezing his paws may actually lead to increased jumping. Pushing him off is also not recommended because most dogs see that as an invitation to play. The dog will usually come back for more play and continue to jump. Make definite decisions about manners. Will your dog be allowed on the furniture? Are any rooms "off-limits"? When you tell your puppy "no", you must be prepared to enforce your decision immediately.

## **Nothing is Free:**

The "nothing is free" technique helps you establish leadership. The concept is to teach your puppy "nothing in life is free". Your dog must obey a command before he gets anything. No food rewards are used. The reward is what he wants in the particular situation, be it love, praise, pats, going out, etc. Don't allow your dog to be demanding in obnoxious ways. The only way he should get what he wants is by behaving. An example of this technique would be to ask your dog for a sit-stay cue before placing the bowl and food on the floor for a meal. If the dog stands up and moves toward the food before you have released him, lift the bowl from the floor and ask the dog to sit again. Continue this until he will sit/stay without standing up. Give a release cue ("okay") to tell him that he can eat.

## **Additional Training:**

Additional training can begin as young as 8 weeks of age. Our on-staff trainer is available to help you teach your dog to:

- Sit and stay on command
- Come when called
- Walk on a leash

... and much more. Please call (630)968-2812 for more information.

## **Good Books to Read:**

- It's Me or The Dog: How to Have the Perfect Pet by Victoria Stilwell
- Play Together, Stay Together: Happy and Healthy Play Between People and Dogs by Karen London and Patricia McConnell
- The Ultimate Puppy Toolkit by Premier Pet Products
- Way to Go: How to Housetrain a Dog of Any Age by Karen London and Patricia McConnell