

PUPPY BASICS

Congratulations and welcome to puppy parenthood! No matter what breed or mix you have chosen, your new little one will bring many changes to your life. Enrolling your pup in Puppy Kindergarten is the first positive step to help guide him/her through some very important formative months. Here are a few things you should know when raising a puppy.

- **Puppy Proof your Home-** Puppies get into everything.....EVERYTHING! There is no difference in safety between preparing for a puppy and a toddler. Get down on your knees and look at your home from your puppy's perspective. Look for wires, electrical outlets, rugs with fringe, hanging potholders and dishrags that smell like food. Everything should be off the floor (put away your shoes) and closed up.
- **Set up a Puppy Space-**Don't allow your puppy the run of the house until he has been house trained. Start him in one room that can be enclosed by a door or gate. The room should have a crate (if crate training), chew toys and water bowl. If you can't dedicate room, try getting using a baby pen. That way your pup can have the freedom to walk around and you can watch him.
- **Chewing-**Puppies test out their environment by putting things in their mouth. In addition, they are also teething. The need to gnaw on something is constant. Kitchen chairs and base boards made of wood are common victims of puppy piranhas. To save your furniture, you can spray some "Bitter Apple" wherever needed. It's an unsavory tasting spray that usually keeps pups away. You can also use White Vinegar. Keeping chewing toys available gives your pup better options. Nylabones and Kongs are available in most pet stores. Create your own teething toy by wetting a washing cloth and freezing it. Frozen baby carrots work well too.
- **Nipping-OUCH!** Once you have felt the razor sharp edges of puppy teeth on your skin you never forget it. Puppies learn bite inhibition (how to control their mouths), by playing with other puppies. If one puppy squeals in pain-game over. Humans need to relay that message in a similar way. If you feel puppy teeth, make a loud noise or say "Ouch!", take away your hands and turn away from the puppy. The goal is not to scare the puppy, but make it clear you are not interacting anymore if teeth are involved.
- **Socialization-** Between 8 and 16 weeks is your pup's socialization period. Proper socialization during this time is important to his development of temperament, problem solving skills and how he relates to his environment. You need to expose your dog (slowly) to different people (adults and children), places, textures, sights and sounds. Playing with other puppies (not adult dogs) is also invaluable at this time. **Worried about exposing your puppy to diseases before he is fully vaccinated?** Only you and your veterinarian can make that decision. However, the American Veterinarian Society for Animal Behavior, (AVSAB), believes a puppy is more at risk of developing behavior issues from not being socialized than contracting a disease. For more information, please read the AVSAB Statement on Puppy Socialization at http://www.avsabonline.org/avsabonline/images/stories/Position_Statements/puppy%20socialization.pdf
- **Housebreaking-**We could write a book on the subject. But it's really a very simple concept, intake and output. Track the times your puppy eats, drinks, exercises and plays. Your puppy will need to eliminate within 30 minutes of any of these activities. Keep your puppy in a confined space like a crate when you cannot watch him (ex: sleeping, doing chores). Designate a potty spot outside. When you let your pup out, go to that spot and say a word or phrase like, "go potty" or "hurry up." Do not play or interact with him at this time, it's only time for potty. Give Big Praise when your pup does his business! If he or she does not eliminate, it's time to back into the crate and try again in awhile. **Accidents?** If you come in to the room and find a mess, there's nothing you can do, but clean it up. If you catch your puppy in the act, make a loud noise and immediately take your puppy outside to his spot.

