

## **Behavioral Survival Strategies for the Puppy's First Year**

Canine and feline behavior problems can be a real challenge to correct, but with a little forethought and the right information, you can easily prevent most common problems. Many owners begin their relationship with a new pet armed with misinformation and an idealistic view of the pet-owner relationship. Individuals in the pet health care profession have many opportunities to help owners get off to a good start. We are here to help answer your questions about how to properly shape behaviors or handle problems with your new family member.

### **Socialization**

Dogs and cats both have a critical period in their lives when they learn to interact with members of the same, and other, species. In dogs, that period is between 4 to 12 weeks of age. In cats, it is approximately between 2 to 7 weeks of age. After these periods, their ability to develop confidence in interacting with other living beings gradually decreases. During the early months of life, puppies need to have as many positive experiences as possible with members of the same species and other species with whom they will live. Puppies need to be around humans of all ages and appearances in order to reduce the likelihood of shyness and fear aggression. It is important that owners without children provide adequate, supervised interaction with children of all ages. It is not uncommon for young couples to have problems when they start their family because the pet has never been socialized to children.

### **Rules for Training Young Pets**

#### **1. Don't take good behaviors for granted!**

The best way for the pet to learn to do what the owner wants it to do is by rewarding it when it has done something acceptable. You should actively look for desired behaviors so that the pet can be praised. Verbal praise and a small, tasty treat are a great way to get your pet's attention!

#### **2. Set the pet up to succeed!**

Most puppies engage in quite predictable behaviors. They are active, inquisitive, and get into everything. Puppies will eliminate anywhere and chew on everything until trained. It is up to the new pet owner to prevent mistakes by moving things out of reach and providing proper training. Close supervision or appropriate confinement may constantly be necessary for some pets until they reach 2 years of age. The young pet has a short attention span (1/2 second) and is easily distracted. You are not setting the puppy up to succeed if you try to train for too long of a time period or if you ask it to do something in the presence of a strong distraction. Owner education concerning what behaviors to expect from young, growing pets and how they should be handled is of utmost importance. Ask your veterinarian or a Registered Technician with training in behavior if you have questions!

#### **3. Be consistent!**

The whole family needs to sit down and agree upon which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. It is very important that all members handle specific behaviors in the same way. If the family or an individual is inconsistent, the pet will be confused, learning will be delayed, and anxiety may result in serious behavior problems.

#### **4. Avoid punishment!**

You must understand that if you strike your pet, the consequences can be disastrous. Handshyness, fear biting, avoidance of humans, aggression and submissive urination may all result from physical punishment. One of the most important things that the pet must learn is that the human hand is a friend. A loud, abrupt, semi-startling noise is adequate to interrupt an undesirable behavior by a young pet. To be effective, the noise must be given during the behavior, every time the behavior occurs, and needs to cause the pet to pause so that you can give a command ("come", "sit", etc.) in order for the pet to learn what it can do in order to earn praise from you! If necessary, you can use a shake can, air horn, whistle, or other device to cause the pet to pause. It is important that these devices only be used to briefly distract the pet and get his attention. These devices should never be used as punishment or in an attempt to instill fear or cause the pet to cower. Also, never use punishment in attempt to try to teach your pet what s/he should be doing. On the other hand, desirable behavior should always be reinforced.

For behaviors that occur when the owner is not present, environmental devices can be used to keep a pet away from areas where undesirable behaviors might occur. These are several commercial products available:

- Scatmat
- Scranimal
- Spray Barrier

## **Housetraining**

Housetraining can be very smooth if the owner follows these simple rules:

### **1. Teach the puppy where to go**

The speed at which the pup learns where it is supposed to eliminate depends on how consistently the owner accompanies it to the proper elimination area and praises it.

### **2. Control access to food and water**

Feed the puppy two to three times daily at the same time every day. Only leave food down for twenty minutes. Do not feed for three to four hours prior to bedtime. Take the water up one to two hours prior to bedtime after discussing this with your veterinarian. Be sure to talk with your veterinarian before strictly limiting access to food for toy breeds.

### **3. Adequate supervision and confinement**

Until the puppy has not soiled in the house for four consecutive weeks, it must either be under constant supervision by a family member who is actually watching it at all times or must be confined to a crate or a small room. A leash can be an important tool for preventing the pup from sneaking away. Inadequate supervision and confinement are the most common reasons for failure to housetrain the puppy.

### **4. Teach the pup to signal when it has to eliminate**

This can be done by frequently keeping the pup on a leash attached to your belt loop while indoors, especially during times when it is likely to have to eliminate. Puppies quickly learn to sneak away from the owner to eliminate so they can avoid a scolding. When the puppy is prevented from sneaking away, it will become anxious and vocalize or fidget. Since the owner is nearby, these behaviors will be noticed and the pet will be

taken outdoors. It does not take too many repetitions of this scenario for the pup to learn that being close to an owner and vocalizing or fidgeting results in a trip outdoors.

### **5. Odor control**

Use a good enzymatic product made specifically for pet elimination odors. Enzymes break down proteins that have been left behind in urine. Using an enzymatic cleaner will eliminate odors to the pet's nose not just ours.

### **6. Punishment**

Punishment should never be used. The only correction permitted is a loud "No" used to interrupt the pet when it is caught in the act of eliminating in an inappropriate area so that it can quickly be taken to an appropriate location. Submissive or greeting urination should never be punished as this only makes the behavior worse.

## **Destructive Chewing**

Controlling the destructive chewing propensities of a young puppy is of utmost importance for pet owners. Most owners tend to rely solely on punishment to correct unacceptable chewing behavior; however, it is more effective and more humane to correct the problem by reinforcing desirable behavior. This can be done by providing the puppy with a safe environment in which it has sufficient outlets to explore and safe, interesting toys to chew. Since an excess of unused energy can further contribute to the desire to explore, chew, and destroy, plenty of play and exercise is a must for all puppies.

Electrical cords are commonly chewed by many young cats and dogs. This behavior is not only annoying, it can be an extreme hazard to your pet. Biting into an electrical cord may result only in minor shock, or it may result in electrocution, burns, respiratory and cardiac arrest, and death. If you find evidence that your pet has been chewing on electrical cords, you must take steps to prevent it.

Move dangling cords or wires out of reach by taping them securely behind appliances or along boards and walls. Leave as little slack as possible. Cover the exposed length of cord with flexible safety cable to protect the cord surface. It is available in a variety of colors.

Block access to appliance backs or even rearrange your furniture. You can discourage your pet from approaching the area by placing a sticky surface such as a sheet of contact paper with the sticky side facing up. If your cat or dog has a favorite cord on which it chews, prevent access to that room for as long as the animal remains interested in this harmful activity.

It may be helpful to apply a foul-tasting substance along the exposed surface of wires. Many cats dislike the scent of citrus. Periodically running a wedge of fresh lemon or applying lemon juice along the length of cord may be effective. Many cats and dogs dislike the taste of menthol, toothpaste or mouthwash. Bitter apple, hot pepper sauce or mustard may work well. Pets are individuals with taste preferences, so you may need to experiment to see which substance works best.

## **Selecting Appropriate Chew Toys**

When selecting chew toys, you should begin with a variety of toys and determine which types the pup prefers. Rotating through different toys every few days can help

keep them novel and interesting. Be sure to reward the dog every time you see it chewing its toys by giving it affection, play or a tiny bit of puppy kibble. Toys made of sheet rawhide, nylon, and durable rubber are the most practical but toys that have cavities or depressions can be packed with food to capture the pet's attention (Kong toys, etc.) Applying a light coat of chicken broth or dog cheese-in-a-can to toys will also help make them interesting and extend the length of time that they keep the pet occupied.

### **Preventing and Deterring Inappropriate Chewing**

Even with an excellent selection of appealing chew toys, there are numerous household items that may still be more inviting than the chew toys themselves. Until the owners can trust the pet (this may not be until the pet is 18 to 24 months of age), it must be under constant supervision or confined to a safe area (e.g., dog crate or exercise pen). Never give items to a puppy that are similar to household items. Providing objects such as old clothing can lead to problems since the puppy may have difficulty distinguishing between old clothing and new clothing. As the puppy grows older and is allowed more freedom around the home, you may need to take extra care to prevent mistakes. You can teach your pet to avoid specific possessions by making them taste bad. Commercial anti-chew sprays, oil of citronella or a small amount of cayenne pepper, mixed with water and applied to the objects, may be successful deterrents. Booby traps (e.g., motion-detector alarms or sprayers) can also be used to keep the pet away from areas or items that need to be protected when the owners are unavailable to supervise. Be sure that you are not turning to harsh or delayed correction methods (e.g., shock collars).

### **Chewing on Plants**

Plant leaves can be misted with water and sprinkled with cayenne pepper to discourage chewing. Motion-activated alarms or sprayers can be hung in large plants or Christmas trees to teach the pet to avoid them.

### **Pulling on Lead/Leash**

Head halters are excellent tools for controlling pets that are unruly on walks; ask your veterinarian about the Gentle Leader, Halti, and the Snoot Loop. No-pull halters are designed to apply pressure to the axillary areas to inhibit pulling on lead. They provide less overall control than the head halters, but may be better tolerated by some dogs than a head halter.

### **Encouraging Quiet Behavior**

1. You should observe the dog for a calm, quiet response and provide attention, affection, play or food to encourage this behavior.
2. Barking must not be reinforced with any form of attention, affection, food or play. Any attention that does not stop the barking, may actually serve to reinforce the behavior. If barking cannot be stopped, it should be ignored until the dog is quiet, and then reinforcement can be given.
3. Verbal corrections, yelling, punishment, or your own anxious behavior may further aggravate your dog's barking and anxiety.

4. Use of a bark-activated device (audible alarm, citronella spray bark-activated collar) may inhibit barking in some dogs. Once the barking stops, you should then immediately distract the dog with affection or a favored treat or toy so that the quiet behavior can be reinforced and barking is less likely to recur.
5. Avoid leaving the puppy outdoors unsupervised for long periods. It may be stimulated to bark at by-passing stimuli (other dogs, strangers) or may bark to attract your attention. Opening the door or going out to the dog, even to settle the dog down, will only serve to reinforce the barking behavior.
6. When barking arises out of anxiety, the treatment program will need to be designed to address the underlying cause of anxiety as well as any factors that might be reinforced or aggravating the problem. For barking that occurs while you are gone, the Gentle Spray Collar ([www.premier.com](http://www.premier.com)) is an effective, humane product.

## **Socialization**

Even though dogs have been domesticated for hundreds of years, each new puppy that comes into our world must learn about humans. Socialization is the process during which puppies develop positive relationships with other living beings. The most sensitive period for successful socialization is during the first three to four months of life. The experiences your pet has during this time will have a major influence on its developing personality and how well it gets along with people and other animals when it grows into adulthood. It is very important for puppies to have frequent, positive social experiences during these early months in order to prevent asocial behavior, fear and biting. Puppies that are inadequately socialized may develop irreversible fears, leading to timidity or aggression. This is not to say that socialization is complete by four months of age only that it should begin before that time. Continued exposure to a variety of people and other animals as the pet grows and develops is an essential part of maintaining good social skills (e.g., sounds, odors, locations) to reduce the fear of "the unfamiliar" that might otherwise develop as the pet grows older.

Attending puppy classes during this primary socialization period is an excellent way to ensure multiple contacts with a variety of people and other dogs. This relatively new concept in training involves enrolling puppies early, before they pick up "bad habits", and at an age when they learn very quickly. Puppy training and socialization classes are now available in many communities where, in some cases, puppies can be admitted as early as their third month. These classes can help puppies get off to a great start with training, and offer an excellent opportunity for important social experiences with other puppies and with a wide variety of people.

It is important for every puppy to meet as many new people as possible in a wide variety of situations. It can be beneficial to ask each person who meets the puppy to give the puppy a biscuit. This will teach the puppy to look forward to meeting people and discourage handshyness since the puppy will learn to associate new friends and an outstretched hand with something positive. Once the puppy has learned to sit on command, the family should have each new friend ask it to sit before giving the biscuit. This teaches a proper greeting and will make the puppy less likely to jump up on people. The family should make certain that the pet has the opportunity to meet and receive biscuits from a wide variety of people of all ages, appearances and both sexes during the early formative months. Every effort must be made to see that the young pup

has plenty of opportunities to learn about children. Puppies that grow up without meeting children when they are young may never feel comfortable around them when they become adults.

And last, but not least, the family should avoid physical punishment and any interactions with people that might make the puppy anxious. Harshly punishing a young pet will damage its bond with the person and weaken its trust in people. Techniques such as swatting the pup, shaking it by the scruff, roughly forcing it onto its back, thumping it on the nose and rubbing its face in a mess should never be used. Pets that are raised using these methods may grow up to fear the human hand and are likely candidates to become fear biters. In general, any interactions with people that might make a puppy anxious should particularly be avoided during the early months of its life.

### **Food Bowl Guarding**

In most cases, this can be prevented by spending time with the puppy during its dinner to teach it that it is not at risk for losing its food.

1. Be sure that the pup gets enough food at each meal.
2. Walk by and drop small pieces of treat or canned food into the bowl while he is eating.
3. Praise the pup when he is eating and offer treats from your hand to associate your presence, while he is eating, with good things.
4. Hold the bowl when it is eating and occasionally pull it away just long enough to slip a treat or canned food into it, then give it back

while praising the pup.

**\*These techniques are not recommended for adult dogs that have not been desensitized to their food bowls being handled while they are eating. Also, do not use these techniques on dogs with known aggressive issues over food items without first consulting with your veterinarian.\***

### **Food Lure Obedience Training to Teach the Sit Command**

There are many advantages to teaching the puppy to come and sit on command. Using food-lure-reward methods, this can be done in a few minutes. Stand a couple of feet away from the puppy, show him a piece of food, and call him by name. When the pup reaches the food, slowly and deliberately move it over the top of its head. As the pup moves its head back to follow the food, he will naturally move into a sitting position. As he does this, say "sit". Be careful not to hold the food too high over the head as this may encourage the pet to jump up for it.

When your pet learns to obey commands at a very early age, it will help you establish leadership, gain control of your puppy, and it serves as a socialization tool. Teaching the "come-sit" command decreases jumping-up behaviors because the pup learns to approach and greet by sitting. It also decreases handshyness by associating an outstretched hand with a food reward. That is a big return for a short time investment!

Most of a pet's learning occurs by simply having stimuli he likes or dislikes associated with the behavior. Behaviors of the pet that are associated with something it likes have a high likelihood of being repeated and behaviors that are associated with

something aversive are likely to disappear. Timing is very important. Punishment that occurs too late (more than one second after the behavior) will be ineffective and may lead to other problems. For example, a destructive dog that is harshly disciplined for its misdeeds when it greets the owners each day may start submissively urinating near the front door in anticipation of the daily beating. On the other hand, when a reward is given at an inappropriate time, undesirable behaviors may be reinforced. The owner who gives an energetic greeting to a pup that is excited and bouncing off the walls is reinforcing unruly greeting behaviors.

## **Puppy Classes**

One of the most beneficial services that you can participate in is a puppy training class. Working with puppies in a class situation has special advantages. You get a better idea of how the pup interacts with you and your family outside of the home and the exam room. The classes are an excellent way to socialize your puppy to humans as well as other puppies. The other benefit of puppy classes is that they teach the puppy to look forward to visiting new places.

Behavior problems are much easier to prevent than to correct. Remember that early behavior information along with consistent positive training and interaction make a HUGE difference in the relationship between you and your family and your puppy. Please contact your Veterinarian or Registered Technician that has had behavior training if you ever need help weeding through conflicting and inappropriate training information. There is a lot of "training" information available but not all methods are recommended and many can leave a dog scarred for life. A great rule to live by when searching for a puppy school or training class for your puppy is to ask questions first. Some key questions could be:

1. Describe your training style for me.
2. If my puppy is "mouthy", what would your recommendation be?
3. If my puppy likes to jump, what would your recommendation be?

The answer to these few questions will give you enough information to decide if that trainer is a good fit for you and your puppy. Trainers that use the phrases, "hold his mouth shut", "use your knee to keep the pup from jumping", "hold him on the floor until he stops fighting", or imply any type of physical punishment should be avoided. There are better, more appropriate ways of training your puppy to be a well-mannered member of the family; contact your veterinarian for a list of recommended trainers!

Keep in mind, just as human children attend school beyond kindergarten, it is just as important for your dog's training to continue beyond house-training and puppy school. You do not need to enroll him in formal, expensive classes but, for your dog's emotional and physical well-being, be sure to continue his socialization, daily exercise, and even teach him new tricks!

Adapted from: Hunthausen, Wayne DVM: "Preserving the Bond: Survival Strategies for the Puppy's First Year"

## **Canine Housetraining**

There are several very important steps to follow when first housetraining your puppy. If you have any housetraining questions that are not addressed here please call your veterinarian.

- First, pick a location that is practical and easy to access (e.g., a short walk from the back door) and take your puppy to this spot each time.
- Secondly, regardless of the weather outside, you need to go outside along with your puppy each and every time with the pup on a leash. Puppies only have 1/2 second attention span and you need to be nearby when they eliminate. This is so that you can start using a cue word (e.g., "go out") and offering a small food reward immediately after he "goes out". There is no need to remain outside with your puppy for longer than 5 minutes at a time. This is a sufficient period of time for the puppy to be stimulated to eliminate if he needs to. Because the attention span is so short, puppies that are allowed to go outside alone and receive a reward when they come back inside only learn that they get a treat for coming in through the door.
- Also, take the pet out when it is most likely to need to eliminate: following play, exercise, meals, naps, being released from confinement, and prior to confinement or bedtime. Feeding and drinking may stimulate elimination. Therefore, supervise well after feeding and plan to take the puppy to eliminate within 30 to 60 minutes after it eats.
- Maintaining a consistent feeding schedule is also important to housetraining. Offer food 2 to 3 times each day at the same time. This helps you to know when your puppy will need to go outside. Only leave the food down for 20 minutes or until your puppy walks away. However, you should also discuss with your veterinarian how to assess your puppy's body score (i.e., whether it is too heavy, skinny, or normal) so that food quantity can be adjusted according to your pet's needs. If your veterinarian agrees, it is sometimes suggested that you remove the water bowl 1 to 2 hours prior to bedtime.
- Until the puppy has completed 4 consecutive weeks without soiling in the home, it should be under direct supervision by a family member, confined to a safe puppy-proofed area, or trained using tether training. This is a technique where the puppy's leash is attached to your belt loop ensuring that they cannot be unsupervised. The room, crate, or pen used for confinement is intended to serve as a safe, comfortable bed, playpen, or den for the puppy.
- The puppy should not be confined to this area until after it has eliminated and had sufficient exercise and social interaction (i.e., when it is due for a sleep, nap, or rest) and should not be confined for any longer than it can control elimination, unless paper-training techniques are being used. A good rule of thumb is that a puppy can hold their urine 1 hour for every month that they are old. This time frame is shorter if the puppy is playing and slightly longer if the puppy is sleeping. If the puppy eliminates in its cage, it may have been left there longer than it can be confined without eliminating, or the cage may be large enough so the puppy sleeps in one end and eliminates in the other; in this case a divider might be used temporarily. Also, if the puppy is anxious about being confined to its crate or left alone, it is unlikely to keep the crate clean. If this is the case, the puppy needs to be

desensitized to its crate. Please call your veterinarian or registered technician that has had behavioral training to get tips on how to do this.

- Punishment is never indicated as part of a housetraining program. The goal is to interrupt your puppy if it is caught in the act of eliminating indoors, and immediately take it to the appropriate location so that it can be rewarded when it eliminates there. Offering a small food treat and enthusiastically praising your puppy after they finish elimination helps him/her associate eliminating outside with a reward. If urine or stool is found on the floor after the puppy has eliminated, **do not** consider any form of correction since the puppy will not associate the correction with eliminating in the house, rather, he/she will associate the correction with you. Punishment can lead to fear and aggression. You can prevent resoiling in the home by closing doors or moving furniture to prevent access to the location, booby trapping the location with a repellent or motion detector, constant supervision of your puppy, and by consistently rewarding elimination outdoors.
- It is important to clean up any odors from indoor elimination. Be certain to use enough odor neutralizer to get to the source of the odor. Use a product that has been specifically designed to eliminate pet urine odors (one that specifically states that it has enzymes as enzymes are what will break down the proteins left behind from urine), and follow the label directions. Prompt and proper use of enzymatic products will ensure that the pet is not continuing to eliminate in a given area because they can still smell the urine or stool residue.
- While it is best to avoid paper training and only train the pup to eliminate outdoors, paper training is sometimes necessary for apartment dwellers or when an owner is not physically able to have a pet that needs to go outside to eliminate. For paper training, the puppy should be confined to a room or pen with paper covering the floor except for a sleeping area. The puppy should be confined to this area while you are out, or when you cannot supervise. As the puppy consistently uses papers to eliminate, decrease the surface area taken up by the papers. Paper training can be combined with outdoor training so that the puppy learns that there are two appropriate places to eliminate. However, trying to train a puppy to know both methods can be confusing for the puppy and will increase the length of time needed for complete housetraining. The crate could be used for confinement for shorter departures and the papered area for longer departures. Another option is to train the pup to use an indoor litter product. In some communities and households, it might also be practical to house the dog in an outdoor run, or provide a dog door with outdoor access if the owner cannot be home to let the dog outside when it needs to eliminate.

Adapted from: Landsberg G, Hunthausen W, Ackerman L 2003 "Handbook of Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat".

## **Puppy Mouthing, Nipping, and Teaching Bite Inhibition**

Even the gentlest, most mild mannered dog has the potential to bite. Things out of our control happen; dogs get stepped on, sometimes they become fearful and feel they

have no other option but to bite. A dog that can inhibit his bite may some day bite but not leave a mark on the person that he bites. Bite inhibition may, some day, save your dog's life.

Biting, in puppies, is normal behavior. Puppies start to defend their food or items they have against their littermates within a few weeks of age. During the socialization period, they start to establish a dominance hierarchy with other dogs. The theory that an owner needs to "dominate their puppy to teach it who is boss" is antiquated and causes more harm than good. Puppies also bite in play, out of fear, or when in pain. Social aggression follows a genetic program. Before learning takes place, a puppy's bites are uninhibited. Only through interaction with social partners does the puppy learn to inhibit its bites. Interaction with other dogs in a puppy school setting is a great outlet for "puppy energy" as well as an opportunity for them to learn good manners. Normally, the puppy would learn from the adult dogs and, in particular, their littermates. With puppies often taken from the litter at an early age, it will be up to us to teach the puppy to inhibit its bite.

### **Teaching Your Puppy to Control His Bite**

Puppy biting is a normal, natural and necessary puppy behavior. Puppies have little jaw strength and very sharp teeth. Puppies rarely bite with the goal of hurting someone. When puppies mouth humans they are trying to play. Unfortunately, their mouthing can be painful and they need to be taught two things:

- 1.) To control how hard they bite
- 2.) Humans are very fragile and touching a human with their teeth is not rewarding

Your puppy learns how to control his bite from playing with other puppies and dogs. When puppies play and a puppy bites too hard the other puppy yelps. If the puppy bites too hard again the playmate ends the game. The puppy that was biting too hard learns that if he doesn't control the strength of his bite he will lose his playmate and the game will end. This is something a puppy does not want to happen!

### **The first step- no painful bites!**

The first step is to get your puppy to stop hurting people. It is not necessary to discipline your puppy. Discipline will usually make the problem worse by:

- 1.) Increasing the puppy's excitement level
- 2.) Causing fear and distrust

The first step in teaching your puppy bite inhibition is to allow him to mouth your hands. When he begins to bite to the point that it is mildly painful give a good "ouch". The volume of the "ouch" will depend on your puppy. Some puppies need only a quiet tone while more robust puppies will need a loud "ouch" to get their attention.

If your puppy bites too hard again he blew it and the game ends. Your puppy becomes invisible to you and all play ceases. Your puppy will learn that his behavior caused the game to end.

## **The second step- humans are big babies!**

The second step of teaching your puppy to inhibit his bites entails teaching your puppy to eliminate bite-pressure entirely. Your puppy should be now mouthing your hands with gentle pressure, it is now time to let him know how wimpy humans really are. When his teeth barely make contact with your skin, yelp like he's maimed you and continue with the above description. Your puppy will begin to understand that humans have the most delicate skin on earth and if they are not careful, what they love most, you and play time, will be taken away.

## **What does NOT work...**

Dominating or even punishing the puppy for aggression is inappropriate and counter-productive. This often increases fear and aggression. Gradual desensitization and counterconditioning techniques are an absolute necessity together with consistent and positive owner-puppy interaction. Please ask us if you have questions about how best to implement these behavior techniques during your puppy's training time!

## **Further tips**

- 1.) If the puppy is constantly demanding attention through mouthing and biting or is overexuberant in its play, then it is likely not receiving sufficient stimulation. You should consider additional or longer periods of play, training, and exercise, and more outlets for chewing to prevent the puppy's unacceptable play biting. A doggy daycare and a quality puppy kindergarten are two great ways to let your puppy run off that excess energy.
- 2.) If the puppy cannot be quickly calmed and settled, then confining it away from the target (children, visitors) until it settles may be necessary. When the puppy is calm it can then be released, and encouraged to play in an appropriate manner. Be sure, however, that confinement is not used as punishment because the goal is for the puppy to feel comfortable in his crate and to eventually go there on his own. If the puppy needs to be confined, give him a special toy or treat that he gets only when he is confined.
- 3.) For those problems that cannot be quickly and effectively controlled with bite inhibition techniques, a leash and head halter can be left attached when the puppy is with the family. Mouthing or biting can be immediately stopped with a gentle tug on the leash, with tension released as soon as the puppy settles.

- Luescher, A. DVM; Purdue University "ABC Puppy School: Teaching Bite Inhibition".
- Landsberg G, Hunthausen W, Ackerman L 2003; Handbook of Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat.

## **Socialization Tips for Puppy Owners**

Even though dogs have been domesticated for hundreds of years, each new puppy that comes into our world must learn about humans. Socialization is the process during which puppies develop positive relationships with other living beings. The goal is for the puppy to show no fear or trepidation around new situations. If introduced before 3 months of age, most puppies show no fear, and this is good. The most sensitive period for successful socialization is during the first 2 to 4 months of life. The experiences the pet has during this time will have a major influence on its developing personality and how well it gets along with people and other animals when it grows into adulthood. It is very important for puppies to have frequent, positive social experiences during these early months in order to prevent asocial behavior, fear, and biting. Puppies that are inadequately socialized may develop irreversible fears, leading to timidity or aggression. This is not to say that socialization is complete by four months of age, only that it should begin before that time. Continued exposure to a variety of people and other animals as the pet grows and develops is an essential part of maintaining good social skills. It is also extremely important that your new puppy be exposed to new environments and stimuli at this time (e.g., sounds, odors, locations) to reduce the fear of "the unfamiliar" that might otherwise develop as the pet grows older.

Attending puppy classes during this primary socialization period (8 to 16 weeks of age) is another excellent way to ensure multiple contacts with a variety of people and other dogs. This relatively new concept in training involves enrolling puppies early, before they pick up "bad habits", and at an age when they learn very quickly. These classes can help puppies get off to a great start with training, and offer an excellent opportunity for important social experiences with other puppies and with a wide variety of people. Eight to ten weeks is an ideal time to begin classes. Since there can be some health risks when exposing young puppies to other dogs and new environments, the best age to start your puppy in classes should be discussed with your veterinarian.

It is important for every puppy to meet as many new people as possible, in a wide variety of situations. It is always beneficial to ask each person who meets the puppy to give the puppy a biscuit. This will teach the puppy to look forward to meeting people and discourage handshyness, since the puppy will learn to associate new friends and an outstretched hand with something positive. Once the puppy has learned to sit on command, have each new friend ask it to sit before giving the biscuit. This teaches a proper greeting and will make the puppy less likely to jump up on people. You should make certain that the pet has the opportunity to meet and receive biscuits from a wide variety of people of all ages, appearances, and both sexes during the early formative months. Every effort must be made to see that the young pup has plenty of opportunities to learn about children. Kids can seem like a completely different species to dogs since they walk, act and talk much differently than adults. Puppies that grow up without meeting children when they are young may never feel comfortable around them when they become adults.

And last, but not least, DO NOT use physical punishment and avoid any interactions with people that might make the puppy anxious. Harshly punishing a young pet will damage its bond with you and weaken its trust in people. Techniques such as swatting the pup, shaking it by the scruff, roughly forcing it onto its back,

thumping it on the nose, and rubbing its face in a mess should never be used as these are antiquated methods of training. Pets that are raised using these methods may grow up to fear you, their owner, the human hand in general, and are likely candidates to become fear biters. In general, any interactions with people that might make a puppy anxious should particularly be avoided during the early months of its life. Please talk to a veterinarian or technician that has had special behavior training with any questions.

### **Socialization Checklist**

When introducing your puppy to something new, never force them to approach the person or object. If the puppy is responding fearfully around a person or object, forcing the puppy to approach will only do more harm than good. It is best if the person/object remains still and quiet and you, the owner, encourage the puppy to approach by using small pieces of treat. Below is a suggested list of situations, people, and objects to desensitize your puppy to! Once he/she shows no fear or apprehension and is readily approaching, you can check it off of the list. Continue to randomly revisit these situations and objects monthly throughout the first year of your puppy's life.

- the veterinary clinic (bring your puppy by for a pat on the head and a treat)
- examine teeth, paws, tail, ears
- put pup up on a table until relaxed then put down (up & down several times is great!)
- sidewalk mailbox
- horses (keep him/her safely on a leash)
- wheelchair, baby stroller
- freely tolerates grooming with a soft brush
- vacuum cleaner
- practice commands inside a pet friendly store (to teach generalization)
- walk on leash in a crowd exhibiting no fear (e.g., mall or theater exit area)
- accept touch by a cat (cat must be willing or apathetic)
- playful with another dog while on a walk
- give a firm hug for a slow count of 10 (start with 2 and work up, must show no fear!)
- fire (fireplace or campfire)
- dog obedience class
- dog show
- tunnel (hint: you go through first if convenient)
- find 10 new people to ask your puppy to sit for a treat
- mail person (ask the mail person to offer your puppy a treat at least 3 days in a row)
- roller blader/ roller skater
- delivery person
- person wearing a hat
- person holding an umbrella
- person in a costume (or unusual clothes)

## Destructive Chewing and Digging

### Chewing

An overabundance of energy and lack of acceptable activities can lead to exploration and chewing. More frequently than not, the items that are accessible to your puppy when he is looking for something interesting to chew are not appropriate chew objects. It is important to provide enough exercise, interactive play, and training to calm and settle the dog before leaving it alone or unsupervised. There are a number of great interactive play toys that have been designed to combine play and social interaction with family members or other pets. We call those toys that are made to occupy your puppy's mind "smart toys". We have so named them because the dog has to figure out how to get the food reward out of the toy, which often requires some time. These include Kong brand toys and multiple toys made by the Premier Company.

It is important to reward correct chewing. Use praise, affection, or occasionally toss a small treat to the puppy while he is chewing on his toys. It is also important to make certain that you choose toys that are appealing to your dog. This may vary from dog to dog as some may be most attracted to texture or appearance, while others may be more attracted to a food inserted or stuffed into the toy. Choose toys that are durable and safe. Dogs that enjoy chewing should be given toys that take as long as possible to destroy without losing interest. If rawhide is given, the pieces should be large enough for the puppy to gnaw, without chewing off large pieces that can be swallowed. Thick, flat sheets are preferable to rolled or knotted hides simply because they are not as likely to cause tooth fractures. Changing toys or rotating them helps keep your pet interested in them. Also, choose toys that are not overly similar to your possessions. For example, dogs cannot differentiate between old and new shoes and will possibly chew on any shoe if they have been given old shoes as toys.

Even though your dog now has a number of appealing toys and has received plenty of daily interactive play, training, and exercise, he or she may be attracted to chew and investigate some of your household possessions. Therefore, supervision or confinement to a crate or pen when you are unable to supervise should prevent any inappropriate chewing. If you are not available to supervise and you wish to avoid confinement training, it is imperative that potential targets be moved out of your dog's reach (dog-proofing). Use aversive tasting substances (e.g., Chew Guard, Bitter Apple), or use avoidance devices (e.g., Scranimal, Spray Barrier, Ssscat) to keep your dog away from items that might be chewed. If you catch your dog in the act of chewing something it shouldn't, immediately interrupt it with a sharp noise or a pull on a leash if one has been left attached. Then, give a proper chew toy to the pet and praise it as soon as it begins to chew. However, even if you consistently catch and interrupt your pet when it is chewing on inappropriate items, this may only teach it to avoid chewing these items in your presence. NEVER punish after the fact and NEVER use physical punishment. Dogs have only 1/2-second attention-span and punishing after the fact only teaches the dog to fear your approach, or your hand, which can lead to biting.

Chewing and destructiveness may also arise in response to anxiety and should not be considered as an attempt to "get even with you" because, unlike us, dogs are not capable of feelings such as revenge. Treatment requires correcting the underlying

anxiety and this often requires a consultation with your veterinarian or a behaviorist to determine the cause of the problem and develop an appropriate treatment program. In some situations, some dogs become extremely distressed when they cannot be with their owners (separation anxiety), and may respond with housesoiling, barking, or destructive behavior. These dogs need to be taught that they cannot receive attention on demand, but rather for spending progressively longer periods of time away from the owner. Prior to departures the owners should ignore the dog and try and keep it distracted with some food-stuffed toys when they leave. Please contact your veterinarian if you feel that your pet is showing signs of separation anxiety as it is easier to prevent this problem, or treat it while in its early stages, than once it has become severe.

### **Digging**

The first step in correcting this problem is to determine why the dog is digging. Dogs may dig to bury or retrieve bones and toys, to find a cool place to lie down, to escape from confinement, to dig for rodents or prey, and as a form of play and exploration. You'll need to know why your dog is digging in order to develop a treatment program. Supervising your dog while outdoors is the best way to prevent destructive digging. This allows you to keep your dog busy and quickly distract him/her from wanting to dig. Dogs that are left outside, alone, for hours at a time will often dig just for something to do. In these cases, it can be difficult to prevent or correct the problem because they have no direction (e.g., supervision). Using booby traps to deter digging in a particular area, such as placing balloons that pop or water in the hole or a motion detector device next to the hole, can be helpful. It is also important to prevent access to the area by using chicken wire or hardware over the area, rocks in the hole, paving or placing gravel in the area, by confining to a pen away from the area, or by using avoidance devices such as the citronella spray collar avoidance units. Dogs that dig as a form of play or exploration will need increased stimulation in the form of training and exercise and outlets for play and chewing. Dogs that dig to flush out prey and those that dig cooling holes will need to be prevented from digging by confinement or avoidance devices, or by providing them with an acceptable area for digging. One suggestion is to fill a child's pool with playsand and bury multiple treats and toys in it for him to find. Digging in this area can be ensured by supervision and reinforcement of desirable digging or by confinement to the area.