

PUPPY RAISING 101

I was recently asked by my dear friend to write another article for the Chronicles to share with the readers. This one was to be at my discretion -- funny or serious no matter just something to fill the pages of the latest edition. As I pondered my new, found editorial freedom I had many funny stories forming in my head to consider but at this time I decided to write about something that was up and coming in my life. I have decided to breed a litter, well not just one but two. As my luck would have it, the two bitches I decided to breed mated with in just days of each other leaving me expecting two litters in the same week. I started thinking of my pending duties and planning the next several months of puppy hood. I have often been told I raise quite solid, well-adjusted puppies and although some of my ideas may seem a little unorthodox for the most part they work.

So my friends, at this time I would like to share with you my 12 weeks to a happy and well-adjusted puppy.

Week 1-2

The first week is for the most part uneventful. I take extra care to make sure the whelp box has been lined with soft fabric or towels that the puppy can get secure footing in order to stay next to the bitch. I do not like to use

newspaper or any slick surface in the whelp box as I feel it contributes to hip development issues. I change the bedding twice a day (more if needed) and usually do this while I let the bitch outside to air. While the mom is away, I take the opportunity to handle each and every puppy. I take special care to place each and every puppy on its back touching every part of the puppy and massaging its toes and feet. I do this several times every day and continue for the entire 12 weeks.

Week 3

This is a very exciting week as the young puppies are starting to open their eyes and discover the world for the first time. As soon as all the eyes are open I then start adding puppy gruel twice a day to start supplementing the meals that they are getting from their mom. It is at this time you are also noticing the bitch wanting to spend shorter times in with her puppies as the natural process of weaning is starting. Another development with the puppies during this week is that they now have the ability to hear sounds. I start introducing constant noise -- be it a radio or television. This is in addition to the regular household noises of people talking, dogs barking and children playing. We also add small puppy toys to the whelping box at this time. I like to use human baby toys for their size and unique sounds they make. You can clip them to the side of the pen to encourage

your puppies to look up to strengthen the necks and backs of the puppies. I continue to hold the puppies several times every day and at this age, it is increasingly more important to roll the puppy over in your hands and place each puppy on its back. I talk to my puppies when doing this in a puppy voice which by this age usually gets them quite excited. Puppies will also receive their first worming at the end of the third week.

Week 3 usually involves the first toe nail trimming. This is easily done with human nail clippers removing just the hook of the nail. This is usually quite a chore but because I spent so much time conditioning the puppies to being on their backs and playing with their feet it is easily accomplished and sets the tone for a lifetime of stress free toe nail trimmings. Nail trimmings should now be conducted every week from here on out for proper foot development.

Week 4

By week 4, all puppies should be eating very well from the added meals you are supplementing them with three times a day. They should have water added to the puppy pen in a shallow pan by now also. Because they are eating regular meals, you should wean the bitch if you have not already done so. In order to save a bitch from irreversible damage to her teats (especially if she is

expected back in the show ring) we bind our bitches so the puppies cannot nurse but can still be cared for by their mothers. This is done by placing a toddler t-shirt on the bitch. Then pull the t-shirt tight by folding it over several times over the back of the dog and pen or tape it securely. We place a mentholated ointment on the tummy of the shirt to discourage the puppies from approaching the tummy area. The bitch is still able to clean her puppies and teach appropriate social interaction skills without further damage to her teats.

Week 5

Your growing brood is now needing a significantly larger space to live so if you have not already done so, now is the time to move them to a larger living area. This area should allow the puppies an area which is bedded for them to sleep and there should be plenty of room for them to play and romp with each other. You will notice that your puppies given enough room will potty in one area of the pen while keeping the rest of the pen clean for sleeping and playing. In the puppy pen you should have fresh water available and a dry kibble for snacking to encourage chewing which is separate from the regular meals they will be getting. I like to make sure at this stage that I provide interesting toys of different textures and sounds for them to explore.

Week 6

Introduce objects to the puppy pen that allow the puppies to climb on, climb in or around them. They will be very curious at this stage and will be interested in getting on top of things and in things. We have a puppy teeter totter and a box with holes in it to climb in also. Another good choice is a tube to climb through and sleep in. A 25-30 cm diameter PVC pipe about 61cm long with sanded edges works very well.

In the U.S., the first puppy shots are available from age 4 weeks. I like to wait till 6 weeks before giving my first set of shots. The second will be given at 8 weeks and the last set will be given at 12 weeks along with Rabies vaccine.

Because my puppies will have received their first set of vaccines at this time it is safe for them to venture outside weather permitting for periods of play. This is great for them to experience grass and playing in the dirt for the first time.

Week 7

Puppies will spend more time outside playing. Allow them enough room to move freely as important muscle development is taking place at this time. Do not worry about them playing too hard or too much as they will fall fast asleep the minute they wear themselves out. This is a great time to start evaluating puppy

movement and development. I find this to be one of the best puppy rearing times as I am able to watch their personalities develop as they explore their new world.

It is at this time I will start inviting friends, family and neighbors over to play with my puppies. An introduction to children is very important also. Puppies need as much human contact as possible and not just from you!!!! It is very important that puppies receive attention from people other than those who have raised them. They need to hear different voices and to see different shapes of people. Have these people pick up the puppies, roll them over and talk loudly.

Week 8-9

Puppies will get their second set of puppy shots at this age as well as another worming. It is now that it is safe to travel with the puppies. For those of you who are brave traveling with puppies is great socialization for them. Taking puppies to stores, parks or other public places where they are allowed and letting them interact with people is very good for young puppies. Continue to allow them to experience new places, people and sounds.

If you have not already done so take the time to make sure your puppies have experienced different floor textures. It is very important

your puppies have experienced walking on the following footing types:

1. Linoleum
2. Tile
3. Concrete
4. Carpet
5. Grass
6. Dirt
7. Sand/gravel
8. Water
9. Uneven footing or something else that moves when they stand on it such as a puppy teeter-totter.

Week 10

If you have not already done so, start separating your puppies at night from the rest of the litter. I purchase small 100 size crates and place a fleece type blanket in the crate for each puppy. This will ensure when your litters go home with their new families the puppies will not suffer the stress of separation along with adjusting to a new home. Many puppies will ship to new homes and you do not want their first crate experience to be moving day. Do the puppies a favor and take the time to crate train them prior to going to new homes. Your puppy buyers will love you for it.

Week 11-12

During this time, your puppies are preparing to

leave your kennel. Depending on where you live, they can leave your kennel as soon as 10 weeks. By this time your puppies have been visited by prospective owners and many are already sold waiting to go to their new home.

I like to take this time to spend extra one on one time with my puppies before they go to their new homes. I usually initiate house training and we start introducing leash training and make puppy starter packs for my new pet owners. Puppies still at the kennel at this age receive their third set of shots and Rabies vaccination as well as the last worming until they are one year of age.

Well I hope you have enjoyed reading my theory regarding puppy rearing.

So as you prepare to breed and raise a litter, and finally sending your puppies to their new homes, please remember that raising a well-adjusted, socially secure and quality puppy **starts with you, the breeder.**

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