

KPT: WEEK 4
ADDRESSING SPECIFIC PUPPY PROBLEMS

A. BITING

Puppies explore their world through sight, smell, hearing and touch. Since they cannot pick up an object and feel it with their paws, they use their mouth. This practice often results in humans being nipped or chewed on.

Regardless of the puppy's motivation, placing teeth on human skin is NOT ACCEPTABLE. Utilize the following suggestions to eliminate biting early on:

- When the pup is young, a high pitched "ouch" is often effective. This sound is equivalent to what a littermate might make when he is bitten too hard in play.
- Redirect the pup by having an appropriate chew toy on-hand at all times. Offer the toy and praise for appropriate chewing.
- Use a squirt bottle that contains 50% vinegar and 50% water. When the pup nips, immediately spray the solution towards his mouth and firmly tell him "Don't".
- If the above suggestions are ineffective, give a more severe correction by placing your hand over the pup's mouth and folding his lips under the two canine teeth and tell the puppy "Don't". This method pinches the puppy's lips and should discourage him from wanting to put his mouth on your arm or hand again. This correction should be firm and brief.
- Sometimes a puppy will respond to a physical correction by becoming even more excitable and nippy. The easiest solution to this problem is to have the puppy on a leash at all times. When the puppy bites, simply give him a firm leash correction and tell him "Don't". Remember to remain calm and matter-of-fact during these incidents. In addition, teach the puppy the Leave command so that you can warn him before his teeth touch your skin.

B. CHEWING

Puppies chew for a variety of reasons: to stimulate proper jaw development, when cutting teeth, to help adult teeth to grow in, exploration, boredom, and just plain fun. Chewing is perfectly acceptable in pups--as long as they are chewing on the appropriate item!

The most effective way to combat unwanted chewing is prevention. Begin by puppy proofing your house so that dangerous and tempting objects are removed from his reach. This includes securing electrical cords, locking up cleaning products and poisons, purchasing locking lid trash cans, placing plants on high shelves and keeping children's toys off of the ground. In the puppy's view, anything within his reach is fair game. Second, ensure that the puppy is supervised at all times. You may choose to have the puppy umbilical corded to you, on a tie down in the same room, or in his crate. This will ensure both the safety of the puppy and your house!

Purchase appropriate chew toys such as nylabones, kongs, rubber balls, sturdy fleece toys and cow hooves. Do not give the pup rawhide, stuffed animals with sewn on parts that can be torn off, or human items such as a shoe or a sock. Show the pup his toys and stimulate his interest in them by hiding them, moving them around and praising him for playing with the toys.

When the pup is caught chewing an inappropriate object, tell him "Don't", remove the object from his mouth and replace it with one of his toys. Praise him for chewing his own toy. As the puppy comes to understand the Leave command, you can warn him not to pick up the inappropriate object beforehand.

C. COPROPHAGYIA

Many puppies eat both their own and other animal's stools. Natural or not, the practice is undesirable and can pose a threat to the puppy's health. First, you should check with your veterinarian to ensure that the pup's habit does not stem from a health problem. If the puppy is healthy, you can eliminate this practice by ensuring that all stools in the pup's yard are picked up immediately. Since you are toileting the dog on leash, this should not be a problem. In addition, supervise the puppy when it has access to other stools and tell the puppy "Leave". Remember that a puppy that has not completed its shots should never even sniff a strange dog's stools.

Food additives are another solution, which make the stools smell and taste unpleasant. Forbid is a prescription additive which can be purchased at a veterinarian's office and should be placed on the food of all the dogs in the household for at least three days. Other food additives that may work are canned spinach, canned pineapple, and MSG products such as Lowry's seasoning salt. Mix one of the additives into the food of all the dogs in the household until the behavior stops.

Cat stools are a delicacy to most dogs and there is often very little the puppy raiser can do to convince them otherwise. The best way to prevent snacking from the litter box is to purchase a hood that will allow the cat to enter and exit freely, but excludes the puppy. You may also want to place the litter box out of reach on a high counter or table. Begin this practice from day one so that the puppy does not acquire a "taste" for this puppy favorite.

D. FEAR

Each puppy is in the process of exploring the world. Things that seem commonplace to you and me may seem very threatening to a young pup. If a puppy shows fear, use the following steps to help overcome it:

- Do NOT pull the puppy to the fear object. Stand still and let the puppy approach the object on its own. Pulling it towards the object will increase his fear and his drive to run from the feared object.
- If the puppy approaches the object, calmly praise it. By doing this, you are rewarding the pup for being brave.
- Be careful not to coddle or reassure the puppy when it is frightened. When you pet a frightened puppy and tell it "It's okay", you are only encouraging the pup to show fear towards that object in the future.

- Use food or a favorite toy to lure the pup to or near the feared object. Remember, the puppy must approach without any prodding or pulling from the handler.
- Puppies who are fearful in many situations often have a pattern that is not always obvious. First, contact your trainer or puppy coordinator for specific help. Second, keep a log detailing when, where, and what the fear was focused on. Additionally, record your reaction to the fear and how the puppy responded to you. Share the log with your trainer or puppy coordinator so that any behavior patterns may be identified and altered.

E. JUMPING UP

Puppies who jump on people are either vying for attention, toys, treats, or all three. Regardless of the reason, jumping up is not permitted in an assistance dog. Begin by making entrances and exits uneventful and unemotional. For example, do not give puppy a lot of kisses and attention just before you leave the house. This practice will only excite him and build his anxiety about being left behind. Instead, place him in his crate and calmly praise him for the Kennel command. When you return, do not run to the puppy and smother it with attention. Make your arrival non-eventful by taking the time to put down your things and calmly petting the puppy a few times. Playtime should come only after you have both settled in and relaxed.

The following are some solutions to keeping all four feet on the floor:

- Never let this problem start. From the time you get your pup treat her as if she weighs 150 pounds and is covered with mud. If you allow an eight-week-old pup to jump on you and on guests because they are so cute, you are teaching the pup that it is good to jump on people. These pups are always learning, you should always be teaching.
- Ignore the puppy until he stops jumping. Praise the pup when all four feet are on the floor. Be careful not to get him so excited that he begins to jump up again.
- Place a squirt bottle filled with 50% water and 50% vinegar near the areas where the puppy is most likely to jump up (e.g.: the front door, outside of the crate, etc.). When the puppy jumps up, tell him "Don't off" as you spray him with the squirt bottle. Reward him as soon as he behaves appropriately. (Dogs who love vinegar may respond better to lemon juice or Binaca.)
- Place the puppy on leash before he becomes excited. For example, take the time to leash the puppy before answering the door or put his leash and collar on before removing him from his crate. When the puppy jumps up, firmly tell him "Off" and give a sharp leash correction towards the floor. Remember to reward the puppy when he behaves appropriately.
- In addition to the above solutions, teach an alternative behavior such as a Sit or Down-Stay. You will want to keep the sessions short at first so that the puppy can be successful and earn rewards. If a squirmy puppy just can't maintain a Sit-Stay when company arrives, try placing your hand underneath his collar and pulling up while holding his bottom down while the guest briefly pets the pup. By forcing the puppy to do a Sit-Stay, you are teaching him the benefits of performing the command.

Lessons:

SIT With a Verbal Command (30 seconds)

Reason:

- To teach the puppy to SIT on Command
- To teach the puppy self control
- To maintain control over the puppy in distracting situations

How to teach:

- Place the puppy by your side
- Say the puppy's name and then tell him "SIT"
- If the puppy sits, praise him and then give him a treat
- If the puppy does not SIT, give him a firm correction
- If the puppy does not SIT, give him a firm correction upwards, then praise the puppy and give him a treat
- Tell the puppy to "Stay" and remain by his side
- Wait 30 seconds and then tell the puppy "Release"

Tips:

- Be sure to give the praise and/or petting before you give the treat. Eventually, we will drop off the treat and will reward the puppy by praising and/or petting
- When correcting a puppy, always correct in the direction that you want him to go; for example, correct straight up from the puppy's next to correct him into a SIT
- Avoid pulling or pushing the puppy into position
- If the pup breaks his Stay before the Release command, calmly give a leash correction straight up and tell him "Don't, SIT"; praise him for the SIT

Homework:

Practice the SIT at least 6 times per day in the house or quiet environment

Leash Work With U-Turns (flat collar)

Reason:

- To teach the puppy to maintain a loose leash
- To teach the puppy to pay attention to the handler

How to teach:

- Obtain the puppy's attention by calling his name (you may use a lure if needed)
- Tell the puppy "Let's Go"
- Praise the puppy for following you (if using a lure, let the puppy have it every few steps)
- As you are walking, make a u-turn and walk in the exact opposite direction encourage the puppy to follow you by clapping, praising or using a lure
- Tell the puppy "Release" when you finish walking

Tips:

- Keep sessions short
- Correct the puppy only when it pulls the leash tight by giving a sharp jerk as a correction; do not pull the puppy towards you

Homework:

- Practice the Let's Go command with u-turns at least 10 times per day in the house or quiet environment
- As the puppy improves, extend your training sessions and try working in the yard

Here On A Six-Foot Leash

Reason:

- To teach the puppy that he must always come when called
- To teach the puppy that the Here command is fun!

How to teach using placement:

- Place the puppy on a six-foot leash and tell him "Release"
- When he is distracted, bend down and say "Here"
- Encourage him towards you by clapping your hands and using a high-pitched voice to praise him
- Praise and pet him when he comes to you
- Give the "Release" command
- If the puppy will not come, give him a sharp correction towards you and reward him when he comes to you

Tips:

- If the puppy becomes distracted while coming to you, get his attention and run backwards (Puppies love to chase things!)
- Only call a puppy to you for fun things such as meals, walks, playtime or petting; if a bath, or a trip to the veterinarian is planned, go get the puppy without calling him
- Never, ever call the puppy to you unless he is on leash (until otherwise instructed); this is the fastest way to teach the puppy that he does not HAVE to come when called
- Never pull the puppy to you; use encouragement and corrections for the Here command

Homework

Practice the Here command on a six foot leash in the house and backyard 3-5 times per day

Roll

Reason: To position the pup on her back. This is used by some graduates for grooming.

How to teach (baby stage):

Sit on the floor and place your pup in the cradle position.

As you roll the pup, praise with “good roll”

Praise for holding position

If your pup has a solid down you can command her to DOWN and then use a food lure, bringing the lure from the pups nose back towards her ear. The pup should flip in order to get the treat.

Make sure the pup is rolling towards you, not away

Shake

Reason: To teach the pup to offer you or another person his paw. This is used by some graduates to untangle a leash and can be a good way to allow interaction with the public, without letting things get out of control.

How to Teach:

Lure your pup into a sit, but do not use the sit command (since you do not want to have to correct if he breaks).

Start by tickling the back of your pup’s paw to see if he picks up his foot. If he does, praise.

You may also pick the paw up and praise.

You may also try using the collar to tip the pup off balance and then praise when the paw comes up off the floor.

The ideal shake is the pup shaking on command only, and bringing his paw to his shoulder height.

Remember NOT: to allow uncommanded shakes (pawing). Teach the shake in three steps.

Step 1 – Shake with body cue (person’s hand presented and command)

Step 2 – Shake with verbal command only – grab the paw AFTER it is presented

Step 3 – Targeted shake – move hand and pup should reach to hit your hand with his paw

Car

Reason: To teach the pup to enter a vehicle. The pups are too young to perform this command yet, but this will show you what we expect. For the safety of the pup and the handler, the pup should only enter or exit a vehicle on command.

How to Teach

Every time you put your pup into the car, use the command “CAR” and place them in the vehicle. As the pup matures, he will be able to climb or jump into the car on his own. Use a lure or treat if you wish. As he learns the command make sure he is only getting in when you issue the verbal command.

To ask the pup to exit the vehicle, use the OFF command.

Tips – Try to test yourself to see if you’ve done a good job teaching the pup what the command CAR means. Open the door and say “Pickle!” and see if he jumps in. He shouldn’t.

Remember to use OFF instead of release to have the pup exit the vehicle. We want the pup to be attentive to the handler in or out of the vehicle.

Review the Tips of the Road handout that CCI gave you when you got your pup. Is your pup riding in a safe spot? Do you know what a safe spot is?

Off

Reason: to teach the pup to place all 4 feet on the floor, and remove any body parts from the handler body. This command can be used to ask a pup to exit a vehicle, to remove his paws from a wall or table, to place his feet back on the floor after doing a LAP, and to remove his head from your leg after doing a VISIT.

To teach: use a lure to lead your pup out of the car, off an object (after the JUMP command), or after the LAP or VISIT. Once the pup understands the command a small leash corrections can be used to help remind him of what you want.