

KPT: WEEK 5
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Puppies go through many stages in their journey to adulthood. As a puppy raiser, it is important to understand what the pup is experiencing at the different stages. The four stages that we will discuss are the neonatal period, the transitional period, the socialization period and the juvenile period.

A. The Neonatal Period
1-13 Days

During this period, the pups are extremely dependent on their mother. They cannot see or hear. Their sense of smell is present and they can achieve simple learning such as how to search for a nipple buried in fur. However, their main job is to sleep. In fact, they spend approximately 90% of their time asleep. This helps the brain and central nervous system to develop. CCI puppies live in a round plastic kid's pool, which keeps the puppies confined and serves as a sort of a den.

The pup's have poor control over their own body temperature and will cuddle up to their littermates or mother for warmth. They cannot even eliminate on their own, but must rely on their mother to stimulate their anal and genital areas by licking them.

From the age of one to six weeks, the breeder caretakers introduce mild stress on a regular basis through various handling exercises. This exposure to stress at a young age helps the puppy to become both physically and mentally resilient to stress in the future. The puppy's hormonal reaction to stress also helps to fight off disease.

B. Transitional Period
13-20 Days

It is at this stage that the puppies begin to develop all of the basic necessities of life. Their eyes begin to open at around 13 days. The progress is slow and the pup will not be able to clearly see forms until approximately 28 days.

As sight develops, the pups begin to move around more. At approximately 16 days, a few of the pups will try walking and the rest will soon follow. In the meantime, their sense of smell has been refined and they begin to explore their environment. They rely on their sense of smell heavily, as it is estimated to be 100 times greater than our sense of smell.

Around the 18th day, the upper canines begin to develop. The pressure of the incoming teeth encourages the puppies to begin mouthing each other. As the pups become more confident, the extensive play periods begin.

Finally, the ears begin to open at approximately 20 days. This is a time when breeder caretakers are careful not to expose the puppies to loud noises, which may cause permanent trauma.

The dam begins to spend time away from the puppies as they become more independent. This is a natural process of allowing the puppies to gradually become accustomed to being on their own.

C. Socialization Period 4-12 Weeks

This is the period in which each puppy's personality begins to develop. During the age of 4-6 weeks, the main emphasis is on socialization with other dogs. The puppy begins to socialize to humans during the 5th or 6th week.

4-6 Weeks: Dog Socialization

The puppies can move around freely now and the pool is removed. With their new ability, they instinctively move away from their eating and sleeping area to defecate. The puppies' teeth have become very sharp, which causes the dam to tolerate only brief nursing sessions. The pups can now be weaned onto a soft food. In the wild, wolf pups lick the lips of adults to solicit regurgitated food. This is a gesture that dogs carry over into adult life to indicate submission. The weaning process is gradual, as the puppies still need the reassuring presence of their mother. However, the mother's periodic absences during the fifth week, encourages the puppies to focus on each other.

During this time, the play sessions begin to take on a new meaning. The sessions help to develop muscle coordination as well as place the puppies in many different social situations. They learn about social roles, different positions such as how to indicate submission and dominance, and learn how to use their mouths more gently. They also begin to establish a pack hierarchy that will become more stable around the age of four months.

A puppy that is removed from its mother and littermates before this stage has been completed will not learn the canine social rules and will become overly socialized to humans. Attempts to make up for this later are usually unsuccessful.

5-12 Weeks: Socialization to People

During this stage, the puppy begins to focus on the outside environment and on humans. They now have greater depth perception, a wider range of face and vocal expressions and more physical coordination. The puppies should receive a great deal of attention at this time in order to orient them to humans. In addition, they should be exposed to a variety of stimuli such as different surfaces, sights, and sounds. The environment should not be overwhelming for the pup and he should be praised for positive reactions to new stimuli.

Between the ages of 8-10 weeks, the puppy will enter a fear period. You may see a previously confident puppy begin to act fearfully towards different stimuli. It is important that socialization continue, but that stressful situations are avoided. For example, do not take the puppy to such places as a party, dog park, or train station. A pup that is taken to highly stressful situations during this period will often show the effects as an adult. The fear period does benefit the puppy raiser as it encourages the pup to seek out safety and stability--you!

At approximately ten weeks, the fear period recedes and the puppy begins to act like a small adult. However, the pup still needs constant supervision, limits, and plenty of praise to help him develop manners and proper behavior.

D. Juvenile Period
12 Weeks to Sexual Maturity

The puppy naturally becomes more independent during this stage, and, consequently, begins to make more of his own decisions. At approximately 13 weeks of age, the puppy will begin leaving your side more often and not always coming to your beck and call. In addition, he becomes more excitable and it becomes more difficult to control his energy bursts. Exercise is important during this time as well as strong leadership and control. It is critical that you establish your leadership position by this time and that the puppy's training continue.

The puppy will enter a second fear period from 16-24 weeks. Follow the precautions that we just discussed, but maintain your leadership.

Finally, his adult teeth will begin to arrive and he will enter a teething period during the age of 4-6 months. Although the puppy may seem like a small adult, he will still require regular supervision. Provide him with safe chew toys such as a nylabone or Kong to help his teething.

The puppy will go through many stages during his stay with you. It is important to understand the importance of the stages in the developmental process and how to manage them. If you have continuing problems, call your trainer or puppy coordinator.

LESSONS:

A) SIT (30 seconds with Mild Distractions)

Reason:

To teach the puppy self control

To maintain control over the puppy in distracting Situations

How to teach:

Place the puppy by your side and tell him "SIT"

If the puppy sits, praise him calmly and tell him to "Stay"

Have a friend walk another dog by, bounce a ball or calmly hold out a treat

Count to 30 seconds and then tell the puppy "release"

If the puppy breaks the SIT, tell him firmly “Don’t, SIT” and give him a sharp correction upwards

Praise him calmly when he resumes his SIT

As the puppy becomes more successful, gradually increase the time that he sits

Tips:

Make performing the command more rewarding than the Release

Praise should be given while the Stay is in progress; treats should be given just before the command ends

Remain by the puppy’s side during the Stay

Distractions should be calm at first to allow the puppy to make some mistakes but eventually be successful

Homework

Practice the SIT at least 5 times per day

Build for time so that the puppy can do a 60 second SIT with mild distractions by the next class

B Leash Work With U-Turns (halti)

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 the lure, allow the puppy to 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

If the puppy fights the halti, distract it by using a high-pitched voice, clapping your hands or using a lure

If the puppy continues to fight the halti, give a sharp leash correction and firmly say, “Don’t”

If the puppy rubs his halti on you, turn your knee into him sharply

Homework

Practice the Let’s Go command with U-turns at least 3 times per day in the house or quiet environment (halti and flat collar)

As the puppy improves, you may extend your training sessions and try working in the back yard

C Down (Pup Takes More Responsibility)

Reason

To teach the puppy self control

To establish control over the puppy in distracting situations

How to teach

Give the SIT command

Give the Down command and use your hand (without a treat or toy) to lure the puppy to the ground

Praise and pet the puppy and then give a treat

Give the Release command

If the puppy does not go into a down with the hand lure, go back to using a toy or treat for a few times and then try the hand lure method again

Tips

Dominant dogs are sometimes reluctant to lay down in the presence of other dogs as it is a submissive position; if the puppy will not do a Down in the class room, step to the corner of the room or outside and try the exercise; once you are successful, you can begin practicing the exercise as you progressively move closer to the class

As the puppy becomes more successful with the Down command, give treats at larger intervals (e.g.: from every time to every 2^{nds}, 3rd or 4th time

Homework

Practice the Down command 5 times per day

D Down Stay (30 seconds)

Reason

To teach the puppy self control

To establish control over the puppy in distracting situations

How to teach

Give the SIT command

Give the Down command and use your hand (without a treat or toy) to lure the puppy to the ground

Calmly praise the puppy and tell him Stay

Count 30 seconds and praise and pet the puppy

Give the Release command

Tips

Be sure to stay by the puppy when practicing this exercise

If the puppy breaks his stay, firmly tell him "Don't, Down" and lure him back into position with your hand; tell the puppy to Stay and praise him

If the puppy repeatedly breaks his Stay, give a sharp correction towards the floor

Remember, the puppy will be able to do a longer stay in quiet environments; ensure success and reward by slowly introducing more distracting environments while working

Homework

Practice the Down Stay command 5 times per day
Increase the time to 60 seconds for the next class

E Implied Leave (ground)

Reason

To teach the puppy that he must move his nose away from certain objects
To keep the puppy from eating dangerous or inappropriate objects or substances
To prevent the puppy from being distracted by stimuli in the environment and focusing the attention back on the handler

How to teach

Put tempting treats and toys in the center of the room
Begin at one end of the room and approach the pile

When you are within 12 feet of the pile, make sure you have the pups attention

Walk past the pile at a slow pace

If the puppy does not touch the treat or moves his nose toward the object, reward him with praise and petting and/or food

If the puppy mouths or touches the treat, firmly tell him “Don’t” and give a sharp leash correction

Praise the puppy once he gives you his attention

Continue walking to the other side of the room

Tips

Be sure to clean up the pile at the end of the exercise (without the puppy’s help)

Be sure that the puppy removes his nose from the object; do not remove the object from the puppy

A correction should be sharp and firm think of that pile as poison

Homework

Practice keeping your pup’s attention with things on the ground 3-5 times per day both in the house and the yard