

PUPPY TRAINING – avoiding major problems

Although raising a puppy can be fun, too often the animal is allowed to become a monster :- owners get the dog they deserve!

Early training is needed particularly for males of larger breeds or those with dominant/extrovert personalities.

It is critical that a puppy should learn to be subordinate to all human beings, especially its owner, yet frequently the owner relinquishes the right to this control; grooming, washing its feet, moving it from a favourite seat or even putting a collar and lead on the dog, without its permission, becomes impossible. The notion of " he/she won't let me" should never occur.

Once established, this sort of behaviour is difficult to reverse.

It is not recommended that puppies attend training classes until they are fully vaccinated. An owner can, however, work with a puppy to establish dominance even before the puppy is allowed to attend formal training classes.

Puppies bite in play. This is when the dog learns how much pressure from the jaw is needed to create pain. Many owners endure bites by puppies' sharp teeth because, "it's so cute", even though it is painful. When a puppy bites a littermate a yelp is elicited from the victim, play stops and the biting stops. In effect, the littermate has said "Enough!" Thus a puppy can be discouraged from biting people by "yelping" diverting its attention and stopping the play.

Discipline for such normal behaviour is not understood by the animal and is therefore not effective.

Alternatively, mimic the way the puppy's mother acts; lift the offending puppy by the scruff of his neck and shake him, and/or hold him in a submissive, flat on his side, posture. Having carried out this procedure the puppy should be ignored or sent to his basket for several minutes, (even though he may approach you for affection). This type of psychological approach can be very effective.

From day one teach the puppy that you are Pack Leader and he is bottom of the pack. If his place in the pack is well-established he will be much more contented. He knows that you, as his pack leader, will protect him and make decisions for him.

Your puppy has come to live in your house on your terms. Make the rules and routines of the house clear and stick to them:

Provoke mini-crises in order to solve them. For example, once in a while take food away from your puppy while he is feeding and then give it back, he'll learn two things:

Firstly, that you are pack leader and have every right to take the food.

Secondly, that it will be returned.

Such early training prevents a dog becoming so possessive of his food dish that he bites, or growls at, anyone who goes near it.

House training of puppies starts from day one:

Use an indoor training cage at night and for periods during the day. Whenever your pet comes out of the cage he will probably want to toilet. ALWAYS immediately take him outside and toilet training becomes much easier.

Create a special sandpit/toilet area in your garden and congratulate him on every successful performance.

Take precautions against the soiling of public footpaths and parks: (A plastic bag is quite sufficient.)

Even the most unruly pup can be tamed if all members of the family are consistent in their training and attitudes towards it.