

BASIC RULES FOR PUPPY TRAINING

HOUSE TRAINING.

PET CARE SHEET

House training your new puppy should begin as soon as you get home. The first thing to do is put your puppy on a regular schedule of exercise. Like human babies, puppies are not as capable of controlling themselves as would an adult. The traditional methods of puppy toilet training (such as teaching your puppy to go to the toilet on newspaper) are best avoided since they can end up causing more problems than they cure. Ideally, you should take your puppy outdoors at 1-2 hourly intervals throughout the day to the area which it is intended should be used for long- term toileting. The most important times to take your puppy out are:

- first thing in the morning as soon as you get up (avoid long lie-ins!)
- immediately your puppy wakes up after naps
- immediately upon returning home after your puppy has been left alone for any period
- straight after meals – eating stimulates your puppy to want to go to the toilet. It is probably sensible, therefore
- not to feed your puppy after 6pm to reduce the need for him/her to ‘go’ overnight.
- last thing at night before you go to bed.
- At any time you recognise that “look” – a slightly anxious look with sustained eye contact often accompanied by walking round in circles, sitting or whining at the door.

When your puppy urinates and defaecates outside in the correct place, reward him/her with praise and/or titbits. It is also sensible to start using a special ‘keyword’ such as ‘busy’ or ‘be clean’ so that later your puppy will learn to go to the toilet on command. Avoid using the words ‘goodboy’ as the keyword, since this could lead to problems! Playing with your puppy after going to the toilet successfully is also very important as this is a continuation of the reward for getting it right. After this you can return indoors.

Inevitable, particularly in the early days, accidents will happen. If you are able to catch your puppy ‘in the act’, pick him/her up straight away saying in a firm, but not angry, tone of voice ‘No!’ Take him/her outside even if he/she has already finished and praise him/her as normal. If you discover a mess after it has happened, do not raise your voice, smack your puppy or rub his/her nose in it – you will only succeed in frightening the puppy. He/she is too young to connect any telling off or punishment with the mess.

To clean up the mess, use a deodoriser/cleaner (such as Antiodor) or a solution of a biological washing powder. Once the area is clean, be sure to prevent access to the spot until it is thoroughly dry, otherwise your puppy will be back to investigate the scent and may feel the urge to repeat the mess.

Equally important as regular periods of exercise is a high quality puppy food. A diet sheet with suggestions and advice on suitable diets is available at the reception counter on request.

Given patience, tolerance, vigilance, understanding and adherence to a regular routine, your puppy should be capable of going to the door by about 16 weeks of age whenever he/she needs to relieve his/herself. Investing time and effort at this important stage in your dog’s life is a sure way to avoid much more difficult problems arising later on.

TRAINING your dog to respond to basic commands is part of your responsibility that goes with owning a dog. A disobedient, uncontrollable dog is not only a nuisance, both to yourself, your family and the general public, but may also pose a significant menace to young children and car drivers which, in turn, could cause you considerable financial embarrassment.

You should aim to start serious training at 6-8 weeks of age. This should begin with teaching your puppy his/her name and getting him/her used to wearing a collar and leash. **Avoid the use choke –chains** they are counter productive and can cause serious physical injury.

Until your puppy is fully vaccinated (usually 14 weeks of age) you should confine training to your own home. After this you should actively seek to expose your puppy to as wide a range of situations, adult humans, children, other dogs and other animals. This is called 'socialising your puppy and is a vital part of his/her development to help produce a well- balanced character and an ideal family pet. Training should be fun for both you and your dog. Ideally, you should spend 10 minutes 2-3 times a day, each session being separated by 4 hours. Normal dogs of any age will learn if you use patience and rewards, e.g. food, touch or voice praise. It is important to find out what type of reward your dog prefers and to use that one most frequently at the beginning. The order of training should be as follows:

COME , SIT , STAY , DOWN-STAY OFF THE LEASH , TO HEEL ON THE LEASH

Choose a quiet environment with few distractions initially. Also avoid attempting to start a training session when your dog is very excitable (such the start of a walk), since his/her ability to learn is very significantly reduced in these circumstances.

Use of one-word commands and do not combine them with your dog's name. Give commands in a strong clear voice. Avoid talking to your dog too much during these training periods, since the command can often become lost in a muddle of words.

Your dog should respond to a command immediately and reward should be given within 1-2 seconds of a correct response. If you tell your dog to come and he/she ignores you, give the command 'come' again just before you reward him/her. This way, your dog will come to associate the command with the reward. Initially, you should reward every correct response to a command. If your dog fails to respond correctly at any stage, you should stop, don't reward, and start again at a simpler command. Once he/she is responding reliably, you may start rewarding intermittently. This will make the response more permanent and less likely to be forgotten. Once your dog has learnt the basic commands, you can gradually start reducing the loudness of your commands, but still rewarding him/her for a correct response.

Once your dog has learned the commands from one person, you should then begin to train him/her to respond to the commands from other members of the family.

PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT DOES NOT WORK – the opposite of a reward is no reward, not punishment! (No matter how angry and frustrated you may be feeling!). Punishment may frighten or excite your dog, both of which reduce his/her ability to learn. If your dog is performing some unwanted behaviour, ignore it and instead call him/her to you, tell him/her to sit, and reward him/her for doing so. The more you shout and tell your dog off for doing something, the more attention you are giving him/her which is, in fact rewarding the undesirable behaviour. This, in turn, serves to make your dog do it more often.

The Shrubbery Veterinary Centre, 65 Perry Street, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8RD.

Tel: 01474 534891/333141 & 5 The Link New Ash Green Tel: 01474 873370

