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PUPPY BEHAVIOUR AND TRAINING INFO SHEET

Greenbay Vets are committed to the best possible patient and client care. Our team are friendly and approachable and will be happy to help you with any queries you may have. **Don't forget to ask about our puppy 1:1 nurse clinics on Wednesdays at our Torquay surgery between 5.30 and 6.30pm.**

Behavioural and training problems are common, but fortunately most can be prevented if effort is put in when your puppy is young and most receptive.

Thank you to Andrew Hale, for helping to create this handout.

TRAINPOSITIVE

DOG BEHAVIOUR & TRAINING

Consistency and rules

- Rules and boundaries are important. Your dog will never know what they are unless you know yourself! Decide now what they are to be: Where you do and don't want your dog, what you do and don't want your dog doing, what behaviour you do want etc
- Consistency. You must be predictable to your puppy – both in what you do AND in what you say/ask for. Make a list of the commands you want your dog to learn and make sure everyone in the household uses the same words.
- Your puppy's name should be the best recall cue ever! When you say their name, their ears should prick up and they should give you attention straight away as good things always happen after hearing their name. If you use their name to chastise them then they will learn it's a good thing to ignore you when you say it! If you want to get puppy's attention try a 'Hey puppy' but make sure your voice becomes happy and jolly and redirect them to something more suitable or ask them to come over to you.
- It is far easier and more effective to get a dog's attention in a happy way when they are doing something 'naughty' than shout at them. So, for example if they are chewing the furniture simply get the dogs attention in a happy, almost silly tone and when they come over praise them and give them some fuss and then go to the toybox and give them something acceptable to chew on.
- Don't give all the dog's food in a bowl. Try and hand feed a fair amount of their daily ration and use it for training and conditioning (the pairing of the food with different things the dog meets – people, traffic, sounds etc).
- Have lots of toys in a box but keep them away from puppy. This way puppy has to come through you for them, giving you a training opportunity to ask for behaviour from them, and you have a supply of 'fresh' stuff. You can use things from the toybox to do things such as: trade with puppy to swap for things it has pinched, to redirect away from chewing furniture and to occupy puppy.
- Always trade with your puppy if they have something they should not have.

- To avoid food guarding make sure you regularly toss something yummy into the dog's bowl as you are passing even if it is some more of the normal food. Say your pup's name in a soft happy voice then toss in the yummy thing. Puppy needs to learn approaching human when eating is not a bad thing! When they start looking to you with anticipation then you can go right up, stroke the dog and pop the food in their bowl.

Biting

- 'Play-biting' is a normal dog-dog interaction and is triggered by the movements of the target and stimuli that induce playful arousal.
- It is critical that you help to teach your dog good bite inhibition. It is important that the puppy has chances to mouth you so you can reinforce the fact that it hurts! Puppy needs to know humans are delicate and we need soft mouths.
- NEVER hit or physically punish your puppy- it will harm your bond with them and may lead to issues down the line.

Confinement

- It is useful to have a 'puppy proof' area where your pup can keep out of trouble if you are not there to monitor them.
- Crates can be used for appropriate periods of time. The puppy should have a comfortable bed and appropriate stimulation e.g. chews and toys.

Toilet training

- Observe your puppy, so you can learn the signals that mean they have a full bowel or bladder e.g. circling, sniffing.
- Take your puppy outside regularly and praise them while they are going to the toilet.
- Use a range of places; puppies trained only on newspaper or on grass may develop a preference and refuse to use alternatives.
- Vary the routine and vocal cues. Dogs trained always to go at certain times or after specific cues, can experience problems if the routine is changed for any reason.

Handling

- Get your puppy used to be handled and examined all over the head and body, with special attention to the mouth, ears, feet and under the tail.
- Get your puppy used to things like bathing and grooming.
- Reward co-operation with food, praise and affection.

Noise

- Expose your puppy to noises in a controlled way, without causing alarm.
- Example include indoor noises such as vacuum cleaners and doorbells and outdoor noises such as traffic and fireworks.
- Check out this great site for help with sounds desensitising : <https://www.dogtrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sound-therapy-for-pets>.

Socialisation

- Your puppy should meet a variety of different dogs, other animals and people. Exposure should be supervised and managed, so puppies are not fearful or over-confident.
- Exposure to children is useful, irrespective of whether the puppy is likely to be living in a household with children. Do not allow your pup to play 'chase' games with the children – even if your kids enjoy it, other children may not appreciate being chased by your dog!
- Make everything mega positive for your puppy and continue doing it until they are at least 12 months old. Every dog they sniff, every dog that sniffs them, every person they meet, every new thing they come across – lots of jolly talk and yummy treats/kibble etc. Remember it must be a POSITIVE experience for the puppy.

- Only give a request to 'say hi' about 1 time in 4, rest of the time keep moving on. When the pup does say hi just do it for a few seconds and then move on.

Transport

- Puppies can get used to car travel from an early age.
- Puppies must be positioned safely and securely. Start with short journeys.

Being alone

- Puppies must learn to spend time on their own and to stimulate or entertain themselves.
- Put the puppy in a safe confinement area with e.g. a Kong stuffed with some of their daily food portion, or a puppy safe toy/bone. This gets the puppy used to spending time alone and allows them time to chew on things they are allowed. Make these short and gradually build up. No dog should be left for more than 3 to 4 hours at a time so look for other arrangements if that is the case.
- Spending time with family or friends in the absence of their owner helps puppies develop coping mechanisms for being cared for by others.

What your puppy will enjoy

- Play (alone, with other dogs, with people).
- Toys and chew toys.
- Visiting new places.
- Exercise and freedom to explore.
- Rewards for good behaviour.
- Mental stimulation.

Vet visits

- Have many (at least 6) visits to the vets in the first year – even if just popping in and saying hi to the receptionist to get a couple of yummy treats and leave.
- We want your dog to enjoy coming to see us 😊