

# THE PET PUPPY, ITS TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT

by Wyn Hayes

Bringing up a puppy, like its human counterpart, is largely a matter of common sense combined with your family's way of life. There are, however, pitfalls which can be avoided. You can, of course, learn as you go - trial and error fashion - usually at the expense of the pup who is totally dependent upon you.

You will, of course, have taken the breeder's advice on diet and made some provision for his arrival. Most puppies for reasons of convenience seem to get themselves collected or delivered at the weekend when most shops are shut. No good hitting panic buttons then, so do have a supply of his correct diet ready. A plateful of what's left of your Sunday lunch won't do. Do try and give exactly the same kind of food that he has been used to. The sudden change and complete upheaval can affect the most agreeable of pups, resulting in tummy upsets. However good the food you offer, if it is different his tum will complain. Changes can be made gradually to suit availability in your town with no ill effects.

His creature comforts are equally important. A cosy bed with three reasonably high sides, the fourth lower for easy access. A large expensive bed at this stage will make him feel lost and very lonely. Remember, he has just left his mum and the rest of the litter all cuddled up together in a warm heap. A stoutish cardboard box will do for a start, he will grow out of it at an alarming rate. Put some layers of newspaper on the bottom to prevent cold penetrating from the floor. On this put his blanket and have a spare one for washday changing. Place the box somewhere quiet where he can retreat whenever he feels like it, which will be often. They need plenty of naps, like all babies. Under the kitchen table is a favourite place. Mum usually ends up doing most of the early training, feeding etc, and spends a fair old time in the kitchen and can therefore spot the signs of restlessness which mean 'I want OUT'. Also, few kitchens are covered in the best Persian carpet, so accidents are not quite so disastrous. More of this in a minute. When he is fully grown you can invest in a good, properly designed bed made of plastic or fibreglass, which is easily cleaned and draught free. A basket is not, unless lined and lots of dogs seem to object to their

creaking sound too. None of mine would ever use one. Wherever you decide is the best place for this first bed, he must be able to feel that this is the one place entirely his.

Right, he has his food and he has his bed. The next item of equipment is of equal importance - the thermometer. It is extraordinary the number of dog owners, even breeders, who do not have such a basic piece of equipment. In my opinion, it is a life saver. At the first signs of trouble, loss of appetite, lack lustre, dull eyes, or fretfulness, one should take the temperature. Anything over 101.4F must be taken seriously, so get the Vet. Don't say 'Give him another day and see how he is', that 24 hours could be vital. Give the Vet. as many symptoms as you have observed, plus the temperature. This is made much easier if you can get a proper Veterinary thermometer, which has all the temperatures marked on the gradations - Dog, Horse, Fowl etc. Failing that, an ordinary clinical kind will do, but more care has to be taken to obtain an accurate reading. Wipe with T.C.P., or similar diluted antiseptic, smear with Vaseline and very gently insert in the rectum. Not too far, he is a lot smaller than an adult dog. Withdrew after about a minute, wipe clean and read. You will of course have tapped the mercury down before hand. I hope you will not have waited until such time before shopping around for a good vet. You will need one anyway for the necessary inoculations to protect him against most of the killer diseases. Until he has been properly immunised it would be most unwise to take him out. I know it is a great temptation to show him off to the world, you are no doubt justly proud of him. Please do not be tempted, you have years ahead of you for that. Do not risk his life while he is still vulnerable. Do not listen to those who will tell you that as their dog has been inoculated it is safe for your pup to come into contact with him. It is not. The dog may have been exercised where a sick animal has been. Although protected itself it can still carry disease on its feet, nose - if it is a proverbial "Sniffer" - or any part of its body. If you have been unfortunate enough to tread in something ghastly, change your shoes before entering the pup's quarters. It is supposed to be lucky, but not for your pup it isn't!



Over cautious? Yes probably, but infinitely better than sitting helplessly by watching a small scrap slip painfully away from you. An experience you will never forget. A low temperature is usually an indication in a pregnant bitch that the puppies are about due, otherwise it can indicate shock or collapse. Either way a thermometer is a very valuable piece of equipment.

There is plenty to keep you occupied while you are waiting to take him into the world. Not the least is to make all your garden fences secure. Pups can be proper little Houdinis and escape from the most innocent looking gaps. Never let him have access to the front garden where tradesmen and cellars can leave the gate open. Apart from risk to your pup, there is also the risk to legitimate callers when he is older and thinks he is guarding the place. There is one house in my district where no postmen will call, not a Ridgebeck but the sentiment is the same.

Commence house training as soon as possible. The trick is never to let bad habits form. Observation is the key to all dog management. Get to know your pup's demeanour, it can speak volumes. Young pups have little control over their bladders for the first week or two. Excitement, pleasure or fear can all produce little dribbles, coupled with the call of

nature after a meal. What goes in must come out. Short memories, small tummies and little intestines mean vigilance at all times on your part. Use the same words and the same actions all the time for this exercise. On entering the room after an absence or on waking from his nap or after a meal, pop him outside saying "Be a clean boy/girl". "Clean" will avoid confusion when you want to use "Good boy" for other purposes. Stay with him and make sure you praise him when he has obliged. Let the tone of your voice, not the volume, be an indication that he has blotted his copybook. You are not, of course one of those disgusting misguided creatures who still believe in the old method of "rubbing his nose in it". At best it utterly confuses the poor unfortunate pup, at worst it can result in the habit of excreta eating. Not only that, it will take you twice as long to clear it up and serve you right! Animals like to keep their sleeping quarters clean and rarely soil their bedding, so a few sheets of newspaper spread around the floor will probably encourage him to use this if he is shut up for longer than he can hold on. Overnight can be dodgy, especially if you retire early and rise late, so either change your sleeping habits or be extra patient.

It is a good idea to commence lead training in the garden during your wait, so start by introducing him to a soft light collar which he can wear around the house for short periods. Not all the time please, how would you like something stuck round your neck for twenty-four hours a day? He will quickly grow out of it so keep it cheap and simple. Nothing studded with rhinestones eh? The lead will need to be quite long while he is only knee high to a grasshopper. Make sure it has a trigger clip, not one of those things which has a bit of spring steel which, if trodden on can be sprung open by the dog to close tightly over the skin between the toes. I have seen it happen. The damage a dog can inflict upon himself trying to remove it can be quite nasty. Let the lead dangle at first then start by letting him lead you. It is a sad and totally unnecessary sight to see a reluctant puppy being dragged along the street like a small toboggan. Once he is used to the feel of you on the other and you can get him to go your way. Do not keep the lead tight, just a gentle tug then loosen plus a word of encouragement. He wants to please but won't know if you don't tell him. Never overtire or bore him. A few minutes at a time is enough. Compared to some breeds at ten to twelve weeks he is quite large and has the makings of great intelligence, but don't push your luck - right now he is only a baby and should be treated as such.

While on the subject of the young and defenceless, please remember he is not a toy to be dragged out of his bed at the drop of a hat. He will enjoy a game, be quite mischeivous in fact, but will soon tire and want a nap. Let him stay in his bed until he is good and ready. You would not pull a sleepy baby about, so why a puppy? Many a potentially good temperament has been ruined this way. When he has to be picked up learn the correct way to do it. One hand slipped between the forelegs supporting the chest, the other under his bottom. This way the weight is evenly distributed. Never, never pick up a puppy by his forelegs or under his armpits. The shoulder blade,

or scapula, is held in place largely by muscle which could be torn if a heavy puppy were to be lifted thus. Young children tend to use this method. They must be prevented at all costs. Not only do they do harm in lifting them up, but also in dropping them,

so if you have toddlers too young to understand, then only allow play under supervision.

A few do's and don'ts. Don't give him an old slipper to play with and then get as mad as a wet hen when he takes a fancy to your new Christmas present pair, he will not know the difference. Don't encourage him to jump up at you in play when you are in your old gardening togs and then slap him down when he does the same thing to your white tie and tails. A pup needs to know at all times where he stands. Don't let him down. Don't throw stones for him to fetch, they can be swallowed and block the intestines. Likewise those tiny hard rubber balls which bounce almost into outer space, he'll jump up to catch it and like as not get it stuck in his throat. A largish



very hard solid rubber ball is best for games and a clean hard marrow bone to aid his teething problems which will be imminent. Between twelve weeks and six months the second teeth will be appearing so gradually that you will hardly notice, but everything chewable will, so learn to be tidy and do not leave him on his own in the company of your prized Chippendale. Back to the kitchen with his bone. Never chop or poultry bones of course, which will splinter and tear his innards.

I hope the foregoing will have been of some help to the very new dog owner. One could go on for ever, but space is valuable. It is really intended to help you over a few hurdles and perhaps suggest to you that there are a few more to be met once you have been alerted. It is knowing how to avoid some of the headaches which will I hope prevent some broken-hearted little chap sitting disconsolately in the rescue or R.S.P.C.A. Kennels, instead of giving his family years of love, friendship and devotion. Go to it and enjoy each other.