

# Super Socialize Your Next Litter

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**T**he importance of socializing a puppy cannot be emphasized enough. Great show or performance dogs do not just happen. Having a litter of puppies is a gamble, but you will increase your chances of confident, curious, stable puppies by guiding their exposure to events and situations starting when they are born. Socialization is the process by which the puppy develops relationships and communication skills with other living beings in its environment. Puppies need exposure to all kinds of people, places, sounds and surfaces to prevent fearful, timid and/or aggressive responses to events and situations as they become adults.

Genetics of both the breed and the parents play an important role in your puppy's behavioral blueprint. Choose parents that have the types of behavior that you would like to see in your puppies, that have been health tested and have excellent temperaments and conformation. Some studies show that 35% of performance/personality is inherited genetically and 65% is training, management and nutrition.

Your goal is to maximize the potential of each puppy by stimulating its learning ability, interests and natural instincts. These experiences will leave long-term effects benefiting all.

Often in today's world, puppy owners have busy life styles with long and tiring work and social schedules. This sometimes results in pets being

neglected and left to themselves. Rarely does the pet leave the house or property to meet other people, strangers or canines. The number one reason dogs are surrendered to a shelter is due to a behavior problem the owner is unwilling or unable to solve.

Guided introduction to stressors in early life can produce beneficial results. Studies have shown that puppies pre-stressed in early life, subsequently have a better capacity for coping with stress than pups that do not receive such guidance.

## Neonatal or Newborn Period (Birth to 14 Days)

Pups are able to smell, suck and crawl, yet sensitive to a restricted class of stimuli, which includes thermal, tactile stimulation, motion and locomotion.

Handling during this period has a beneficial effect both behaviorally and physiologically. Animals that are handled early in life show a more rapid rate of development in organ systems, motor coordination, and earlier eye opening. At least 3 times a day, handle and stroke each puppy, being careful not to chill the pup. You may want to do different exercises that involve neurological stimulation. Once a day, cuddle the puppy in all positions (i.e. on his back, head tilted up, head pointed down). The bitch should allow this, provided you have her trust.



## Benefits of Early Stimulation

1. Improved cardio vascular performance (heart rate)
2. Stronger heart beats
3. Stronger adrenal glands
4. More tolerance to stress
5. Greater resistance to disease

These exercises impact the neurological system by kicking it into action earlier than would be normally expected. This results in increased learning capacity, making the difference in performance at an older age. In tests, stimulated pups were found to be more active and more exploratory than non-stimulated pups. They were also more dominant in competitive situations.

## Transitional Period (14-21 Days)

Move the puppies from the whelping box to an ex-pen.

Split the ex-pen into 2 different sections... half being covered with towels or blankets and the other half with newspaper. This helps puppies learn to keep elimination in one area, easing housetraining when the puppy goes to his new home.

In this phase of the puppy's life, increase handling time, touching all parts of the anatomy, especially ears, and feet and opening the mouth. Introduce your puppy to different types of safe toys and various types of music. Continue to expose the puppies to surfaces, sounds, smells, and touching. This is the time to let the puppies experience their first bath.

By day 21, all of the puppy's senses are intact and it is now your job to help bring them to their full potential.

## Socialization Period (21 to 70 days)

This most critical and sensitive period will have the most impact in a puppy's behavior into adulthood. The more a puppy is exposed to the more he learns.

Introduce different toys each day with variations of sounds, touch and smells. (Kongs with biscuits, plastic

bottles with pennies inside, aluminum pie pans, etc., the list is endless).

Move the ex-pen into a more active area, changing the environment where the puppies are exposed to more sounds and activities. Keep the TV, stereo or radio turned on to provide sounds.

Introduce a wet towel or rough sand paper for a different tactile experience. If weather permits, take the litter out on grass first thing in the morning as they wake up. A running hose on the patio is a great source of curiosity as are ice cubes, perhaps made with frozen chicken or beef broth.

Keep a small crate in the whelping box, leaving the door open allowing the puppies to explore using their own initiative.

At a distance, introduce different sounds such as rubbing a balloon, jingling keys, etc., being careful not to scare them.

While starting to wean with soft food, you can start to make small steps in puppy training. I sit in the whelping box with small bits of warm raw hamburger waiting for a puppy to bark, rewarding with a bit of food. While this takes



patience, it is one of the puppy's first learning experiences for response and reward.

Placing a large stuffed animal (bear) will allow puppies to experiment with different play behaviors or for comfort when the mother is away. Make sure stuffed animals do not have any sewn attachments, such as buttons, that could be pulled off and swallowed. Encourage supervised visits with behaved children.

At 4-5 weeks, start separating the litter into crates at night, each with at least two siblings. Small amounts of individual crate time can be done during the day when they are closer to leaving home. Always leave an area with newspaper and a soft area to nest or sleep inside the crate.

Each week trim the toenails, examine their mouths and clean ears with a cotton swab. When time allows, start to stack each puppy on a grooming table and motivate him with food.

Following are suggestions from Dr. Battaglia's socialization plan to stimulate and develop each one of the puppy's senses:

Smell — Orange peel, bread, meat and feathers

Touch — Cool metal, pan of sand or sand paper, bricks, wool mat, metal floor grate, towel in freezer for 5 minutes, metal screen.

Hearing — Radio, TV, vacuum, clock, bell, clapping hands.

Vibratory — Hair dryer, clock ticking, vacuum cleaning

Sight — Cars and TV's

Taste — Toys and different treats (staying with the staple diet though)

## Juvenile Period (70 days and older)

Pups should remain with their mother and littermates until 7 to 8 weeks of age to promote a healthy social relationship with other dogs throughout their lives. Pups removed from the litter early (4-5 weeks) often have problems around other dogs as adults, displaying fear or aggressive behaviors.

Socializing is a life long process. It is important to encourage a new puppy's owner to continue the process, protecting the foundation you have worked so hard providing to the puppy.

Insist that the puppy be taken to puppy kindergarten. The puppy will be able to meet other people, different breeds of dogs, exposing him to informal obedience and manners and social skills.

The new owner must continue to introduce the puppy to all sorts of people; people with beards, hats, wheelchairs, and uniforms and of different races. Explain to the new owners to reward the puppy each time he is exposed to a new stimulus, responding in the desired manner. Owners need to be consistent, training their puppy to be the adult you know he can be.

After the second set of shots, have puppy parties in your home and encourage others with littermates to do the same. Litter reunions are a great way to keep new owners on track with the development



of their puppy, communicating your own goals and to bridge the gap with problems that may have occurred. Go to a mall entrance or park and let passersby say hello. This helps solidify a positive association with strangers. Keep a pocket full of treats for adults and children to offer.

These enrichment activities will create a well-rounded, enjoyable companion. Puppies that are given a rich environment of daily activities will have fewer side effects of loneliness and boredom. Studies have shown that enriched dogs have less anxiety-driven destructive behavior. Try to persuade new owners to get involved in local breed and/or dog training clubs as well.

Your early investment in your new litter will help you place them into life-long, loving homes, setting the stage for each one to achieve his full potential, be it a show, performance or pet home.

Train for the 5 "E's"---- Everyday, Everywhere, Everything, Everybody, for Everlasting results. Give your new puppies the environment they need to be the confident show, performance or companion dog that they can be.

And lastly, "train your dog or puppy as if it is the last day you will ever spend with him."

#### References

Early Neurological Stimulation By Dr. Carmen Battaglia

Sensory, Emotional and Social Development of a Young Dog by Dr. Joel Dehasse

Inheritance of Temperament by Barbara Nibling

Education of the Infant Puppy by Grace L. Blair, M.D.

Puppy Development and Socialization by Dr. Carmen Battaglia



*Tracy and her boxer friend reading the "manual".*

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