**"SHAPING PUPPY TO HIS NEW HOME WITH SUCCESS"**

**Northwest Notes / THE LABRADOR QUARTERLY - Fall 2006**

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BEFORE I send a puppy to a new home, I provide them with these "New Home Success" instructions to help make the transition smooth and successful.

**[ APPLIES to ANY AGE ]**

**HOUSE BREAKING**

Labradors WANT to be clean. Being creatures of habit, puppies will tend to decide on special spots to use for a bathroom and return to it each time. YOU should be the one to decide WHERE those spots will be. Choose a spot in your yard not too far from your door and take your puppy there IMMEDIATELY after meals (if he eats in the house), after spending a short time inside with you and lengthen those times gradually. WHILE he is in the act of going, PRAISE him with.

Good potty, good potty so that he knows you are pleased that he has gone outside. Be sure to stand there with him until you are sure he is done. THEN bring him immediately back in the house with you so he knows that THE reason he was taken outside was to "go". YOUNG puppies have a limited ability (like babies), to hold it for very long and should be taken outside at least every hour. Puppies feel "the urge" to potty as soon as they wake up from a nap as well as immediately after a meal. When your puppy is in with you, watch for him to seem restless and begin sniffing around take him outside to "his spot". If he makes a mistake in the house (No hitting), simply use a scolding tone of voice to say "NO!" but ONLY IF you caught him "in the act". Otherwise, just clean it up.

**NIGHT TRAINING**

After about 8 weeks, the puppy truly wants to stay clean (Especially if he was kept clean in the litter). Puppies in the litter will actually get up from the bunch while sleeping and go as far away as possible to go potty before going back). Retriever puppies are easy to crate train€¦ First KEY to success is the SIZE of the crate; It must be small enough so that if and when the puppy "goes" he must sleep near his mess and can’t simply "get away from it" by going to the other end of a large crate¦. IF you only want to buy one crate for the entire life of the puppy, either BORROW a small crate for training OR divide your larger crate with a front section.

You must take him outside for a very last time to potty before bedtime and DON"T feed him for a few hours prior also. You must be prepared to get up EARLY in the morning also to give him a chance to hold it for a reasonable block of time. At as late a bedtime as possible (at first), show him a small bit of hotdog-type treat, gently help him in the crate and then give him his "positive reinforcement" (treat), and shut the door. LEAVE the room. WHEN he starts to cry, IGNORE him and he will work it out.

If you must, give him at least a HALF-HOUR to "work it out" and go to sleep before going to him. You will confuse him less and crate-train sooner IF you at that time, talk to him in a soothing tone of voice and reassure him that It’s O.K. and then leave.  VERY EARLY that next morning, sneak out to him, open the door quickly and pick him up (if he’s not soaked or soiled), and take him to his spot outside. If you open the door and let him follow you, I guarantee he will "piddle all over the place".

He will probably have an "accident" in the crate two or three nights but just remember you have a baby and you are now in the process of training and shaping him. I find that having some old-fashioned Listerine type mouthwash mixed 1-20 in a spray bottle works great for spraying him off followed by a good rubbing with one of your doggy towels. Take the crate out by your hose and splash a little bleach inside and spray out. Sitting the crate down with the door open and facing downward will dry it out quickly and ready it for the next night.

Once the puppy "has to sleep next to his mess" a couple of times, he will try very hard to stay clean through the night. And, since you are getting up so early in the morning to take him out, you will actually start finding him asleep and see him extend the length of his nights staying clean.

**CHEWING**

Chewing for puppies is NATURAL and NECESSARY and can last for over a year. There is not a "magic age" when it "just stops". YOU decide WHAT is appropriate for him to chew on and provide items that not only invite chewing but are also safe (I get knuckle-type bones at the meat department). There are many chew items packaged up in the pet section also

. Your puppy has to have good things to chew on especially as his baby teeth begin to loosen and the adult teeth are beginning to come through. Anything that you do not want chewed must be put away and don’t assume that your puppy knows which items to ignore. When you do see your puppy mouthing and chewing something that he isn't allowed to have, say nothing and replace it with something he IS allowed to chew on.

**FEEDING BASICS**

The BRAND of kibbles can be huge as the puppy’s stomach is sensitive to sudden change. Some dry foods have a higher percentage of grains versus meat matter and can cause loose stools when all that’s occurred is a laxative effect. Ask the breeder WHAT food the puppy has been on and feed him the same thing for a few days. Make any transition to a different food gradual.

To change foods, start by mixing the old and new brands in a ratio of ¾ of the old with ¼ of the new for a least three days. After a few days of this mixture, go to ½ and ½. After three or four days, feed just a little of the old sprinkled in with the new brand and he will be ready to totally switch over in a few more days. Three smaller meals a day will be comfortable for puppy’s small tummy and I change to two meals daily at about twelve weeks. I like to make the first meal of the day outside in his pen or kennel and always alone and without any other pets. He then has a chance to eat, eliminate, and find a favorite thing to lay down and chew on for a while I have things to do also.

He should always be in a safe pen or kennel whenever you are not in direct supervision. Part of my receipt and guarantee also states that he will not run or play with other dogs larger than he is without your direct supervision as injuries are easily confused with "dysphasia" and can be an environmental factor in developing joint problems later.

**POSITIVE PLAY**

Always praise your puppy for bringing you something; Anything, even trash, shoes, etc. Puppies can easily be traumatized and associate a simple well-meant, NO! with the "act of carrying" something in their mouths. When he has something in his mouth, especially if he is COMING to you, train yourself to just take the object away and restrain yourself from saying perhaps, anything at all. WHEN YOU DECIDE IT"S TIME TO "RETRIEVE", remember to "play retriever" only once or twice and QUIT WHEN he’s totally high on the fun of bringing back. I like to use an old sock tied in a couple of knots and drag it around on the ground in front of him until he’s "tracking" it.

Give it a toss forward and directly away from him so he sees "the fall". AS he picks it up, pat your hands on the ground in front of you calling, Come! with great enthusiasm. Help him hold "his prize" with one hand for a few seconds while you pat him all over with the other. After a few seconds, command, Give and never "tug-of-war" yet use your free hand to squeeze puppy’s mouth open QUICKLY so the word /"Give/" is easily understood. Use an excited tone of voice! THE vital commands or directions he must understand are not just "Sit", "Wait" and "Come" but also that his human is trustworthy. When he comes upon being called, tell him how good he is and touch and pet him.

Carry treats in your pocket during your time out in the yard or in your home so your can reinforce "words" by deciding to call "come" and have a intermittent food reward instantly available. Intermittent food rewards means "NOT food EVERY time when given a command - Always use lots of verbal praise and petting.

**SOCIALIZATION**

Every puppy, regardless of future purpose, MUST be well socialized. This begins right away by taking him with you and meeting other people. He absolutely MUST "associate" people with kindness and look forward to the next time he "gets to see new people". Touching is huge for the young puppy and whenever he meets someone new, he should experience touching and petting that feels good to him. Treats from others is a fabulous and instant way for him to "associate" new people with positive. Most towns offer "Puppy Socialization Class" and the effect of positive play and meeting other puppies will make your puppy self-confident. Later, when is is older and sees other dogs on the street or in the veterinarian’s office, he will be eager to approach and the natural tendency to be dominant or submissive will be reduced.

YOU are the one shaping this little dog and have the awesome responsibility to teach what is acceptable and pleasing and what is not. You will build enthusiasm or confuse and discourage. Security not only is a reliable daily routine but security to puppies also means being able to, with one-hundred-percent accuracy, predict the outcome of his behaviors. We are responsible for providing physical care and safety but also for teaching acceptable and unacceptable which brings security.