

January 2012, and our puppies continue to delight us. I am very pleased to report that they are both completely potty-trained. Their most serious error in the house is to be too chewy, sometimes on BAD things, like carpet and furniture. So, it is still a work in progress, but what wonderful work!!

After you get a puppy, there are so many decisions to make, if they haven't been spayed or neutered, will you do that? Will you take them to a training class, how about puppy socialization? What about grooming? Do you plan on taking care of baths, nails and such yourself? What about pet insurance, is that a good idea?

Let's take these topics one at a time and explore them a bit...

First of all, it's always hard to think about having your new puppy needing surgery, but to get them spayed or neutered if you know you won't breed them is the smartest choice. There are many health issues that you can spare your dog from experiencing by getting them "fixed". Plus, depending on your circumstances, to have a female in "heat", or a male who knows there is a female in heat nearby, it can create lots of neighborhood issues.

First time I heard of "puppy socialization", I thought it must be a joke! Now I think it's as important for the puppy as for the owners! There isn't much training during these classes, they are specifically designed to give your puppy a chance to play with and learn about other dogs. I wondered how Tom & Jerry would react, they play with each other incessantly at home. They are very different dogs at puppy class, very respectful of bigger dogs, and quite cautious.

Going on to more serious training is your next decision, and depending on your dog, it's a good suggestion. The most important command you will teach your dog is to "come". Depending on the size of your dog, and your circumstances, it could be a very important thing to teach your dog to listen to you above all other distractions. Find a trainer who is willing

to work with your individual priorities, and have various teaching opportunities available to you.

Grooming is a very important issue, if you choose to do your own grooming, you need to start early to teach your puppy you are the boss. Bathing, brushing, nail-trimming, etc... all teach your dog to allow your touch. But, depending on your dog, it could be a better choice to have a professional groomer involved, especially if there is a particular "cut" or look you want for your dog. In any case, be sure to touch your puppy's paws, and check inside their ears and mouth often, plus brush them out.

Pet insurance is something I am currently considering for Tom & Jerry, and I will tell you from very personal experience, it would have saved me a BUNCH of money with my dear Cliffy. There are several options available, and I will tell you that the same guidelines apply to pet insurance as to human health insurance, it is best to get it when your pet is healthy, pre-existing conditions won't be covered. I have 2 flyers on my desk currently, one from ASPCA at www.isyourpetcovered.com and one from VPI (Veterinary Pet Insurance) at PetInsurance.com. I would recommend speaking to your vet to get their opinion and recommendations!