



Congratulations on your new family member! We often get asked what to do when a client first picks up their new companion. Below is a brief overview of how we take care of our 7-8 week old puppies when they come home with us. Even if the pup will not be used for hunting, these tips will help create a foundation of good manners that will last a lifetime.

CRATE / POTTY TRAINING:

When you arrive home with your new companion, one of the first and most important things is Crate Training. Not only will this be the pup's "Safe Place", it will become their bed, a place to eat, and a place to relax. Many people feel crates are "cruel"; however, it is the exact opposite. Dogs who are crate trained properly at a young age love being in crates throughout their lives, and are much better citizens in the household. It is their comfort place where they can get away and is never used as place for punishment.

Puppies, like children, tend to be mischievous. They do not know right from wrong, and if left unattended they could cause harm to your house or themselves. Also, travelling with a dog in a crate is much easier, and safer than having them bounce around inside your vehicle, and eliminates the risk of them jumping out the back.

A common thing we see is lack of drive to hunt in dogs that were brought up being allowed to run freely all day. They tend to get a "do what I want, when I want" type of attitude. Similar to an unruly child, this can lead to poor attitude during training, and tantrums when left unattended. They need rules and structure while young, and a crate is one of the best tools to help with development.

Ideally you need a crate proportional to the pup's size. If you put a 7-week-old puppy inside a large crate, they are able to use the restroom on one side, and sleep on the other. This is where potty training begins!

How we begin:

We start with a small crate when we first bring a puppy into our home. Dogs naturally do not want to lie in their feces. This will help them want to hold their bladder until they get to the grass outside. Now, they are also so young they cannot help but go to the restroom several times a day. We begin the first week by letting them out about every 4 hours, and increase the time slowly as

the pup ages. If they potty in the crate, just take them outside and clean up. Don't make a big deal out of it yet as they will learn with time it is much more pleasant to go outside. A normal day for a pup in our house is as follows:

- 6:00 a.m., let them immediately outside (sometimes you have to carry the pup or they may potty inside on the way to the door). Once the pup finishes their business in the grass, we give them a very encouraging "Good Dog" and "Good Potty". They will soon learn that going outside gets a reward, and going inside does not.

- Next we bring them inside for a drink of water, and they are placed back inside their crate with a bowl of food. Once the pup quits eating or begins playing with their food bowl, we take the food away. If they ate a significant amount we will take them outside to potty one more time before leaving for the day. If they are reluctant to walk inside the crate, gently set them inside. Upon a few days of being fed in the crate they will start running to it.

We repeat this process 3 times per day at Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. During the night, for the first 2-4 weeks we let them out at 10:00 p.m. 2:00 a.m. and at 6:00 a.m.

*It is very common for a new puppy to cry when first left unattended. Though hard to do, it is in your (and the pups) best interest to let them cry it out. If you come to the rescue every time the pup cries, you are teaching them that whining, crying, or barking, gives them what they want. DON'T DO IT! I promise you will regret it! If you know they have had food, water, and have used the restroom, just ignore them and they will quickly learn that they don't always get their way. We want the pup to respect you as being in charge. You let them out, you feed them, you play with them, etc. This will create respect for you as their leader and teacher. You want to train your dog, not have them train you!

SOCIALIZATION:

Socialization for young pups is key for developing personality and bravery. The more new things your pup is exposed to, the better. If a pup never left the house and only saw you for the first several months, odds are it would end up quite fearful of new people, dogs, and adventures. When we are inside for the evening or during the day, we let our pups lounge around with us, play games, and socialize. When company comes over it's great for the pup to interact with new people. We take them on nature walks around the ranch, rides in the Polaris Ranger, and truck rides as often as possible. We want them exposed to as many new things as we can. However, we do not take them to dog parks, pet stores, or other pet populated areas to avoid the risk of contracting the deadly Parvovirus.

RETRIEVING:

Retrieving begins immediately when pup arrives home at 7 to 8 weeks of age. It is too often a common mistake to not work with the new puppy in fear of “ruining them”. We see much better success with pups that were started early. A good time to begin a retrieving session is soon after the pup has been let out of their crate. They will have pent-up energy and it is a good time to use it. Keep retrieving very simple and fun. You can add distance at a later time. For now, all pup needs is 3-5 retrieves at a time, at a very short distance. Too many retrieves will bore the pup. You want to end right in the middle of all the excitement and leave them wanting more!! To far of a throw can do the same thing. Pup might go part of the way, and decide it’s not worth all the trouble. You want the pup to succeed every time! If you do this 2 to 3 times a day, it can build tremendous drive to retrieve that will last a lifetime.

We like to start with a small soft squeak toy in the house. Short (2-3 foot) throws starting off, taking it away after a few throws. Once pup is starting to get crazy about it, we begin to use a small canvas “puppy bumper”. These can be purchased at Tractor supply or local pet stores. Lots of high pitch, vocal encouragement and praise will help get them into the game. When the pup returns from the retrieve, give lots of praise. Pet them for a few seconds, and let them hold their “prize”. Gently open their mouth while using the command “drop” or “give” and remove the bumper. (Tug-O-War can lead to bad issues later on.) Tease them and tease them, then throw it again. One popular problem that tends to occur is pup running away while holding the object. DO NOT CHASE THEM!! You will turn it into a game for them and they will not come back. Instead, walk the other direction using a high pitch voice with encouragement, and they will want to come after you. If this is a reoccurring problem, eliminate the option to run away. Use a hallway (doors closed) so pup has only the option of returning to you. After a few weeks of this they will realize how much fun you are and come back no matter what. If a hallway isn’t an option, you will have to get creative. Using the corner of a room, a couch or table as a barrier, or even the garage is a good place to work on them returning. As long as pup has to come your direction, you can subtly move towards the direction they are headed and reward with praise.

Good luck with you new pup! And if you have any questions, please feel free to call anytime.

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