



Puppy Care

You've bought the matching lead and collar set, the soft new bed is placed lovingly by the fire, in it some fluffy toys and the two small bowls sit neatly and untouched on the kitchen floor. All that's missing is your new puppy!

Amongst all of the excitement, of choosing names and picking out little tiny collars, it's easy to forget about all the important stuff (not to say your puppy's pink rain coat isn't important of course)! Let's just rein in that enthusiasm and double check the basics.

Sourcing your puppy

The puppy you are taking on should be from either a reputable breeder, or from a reputable dog rescue centre. Whilst a reputable dog rescue centre probably can't a breeder should be able to let you meet mum and ideally dad too on request and just as importantly should be able to show you where the puppies are being kept. If your breeder insists on meeting you at a mutual location to give you the puppy or claims mum is currently not able to be viewed as perhaps she's "on a walk", then do not proceed. Who knows what state mum is in or if she's even the mum at all!

If you are able to meet and see these things and you are not happy with the conditions, or something doesn't feel right, then do not proceed. If you hand money over for a puppy kept in poor conditions, you are only encouraging that person to continue breeding. It's a difficult thing to walk away, but walk away you must and even report the breeder if you feel you should.

The Medical Side

Your puppy should be no younger than 8 weeks old and if it is being separated from its mum and siblings so early then please ask why. You can always ask a behaviourist or your veterinary surgeon if the reason for this is 'acceptable'. Before you get your puppy you should have already decided which vet you are going to use. When you get your puppy it should already be wormed, treated for fleas and legally it should be micro chipped. You should be provided with the necessary paperwork to prove these things have been done. However it will be up to you to get its vaccinations in order if not already done. Shortly after taking your puppy home, register it at your chosen vets. A check up on the puppy will ensure it is healthy and they will be able to guide you towards worming, flea treatments and vaccinations for future preventative care and welfare of your new canine friend.

First Days

A big mistake is to assume your puppy is a blank canvas. Your puppy, by 8 weeks old, will already have learnt so much about the world. They will already have pre-determined views, based on their experiences, of what they like and dislike. Maybe it has been handled too roughly



by children, so may grow up to avoid them, or perhaps the neighbour's dog used to bark through the fence at them, so already they aren't actually sure if other dogs are that nice to be around. Perhaps, they haven't been reared in a home so have never seen a TV, Hoover or a washing machine. Maybe mum was worried about new people and your puppy has learned to copy her. All of these things will potentially affect how your puppy already sees the world.

Regardless of its experiences, it is so easy to get ahead of yourself. Puppies are safe, cuddly adorable things that seem happy in most situations and so their fear signals are often ignored or overlooked. We know showing them off can be great fun, but think about your puppy. Take things slow and don't put them in every situation possible within the first few days. Give your puppy time to get to know you, and develop a good bond whereby your puppy knows it can feel safe around you, only then should you begin showing it the rest of the world.

First Nights

Your puppy may never have slept alone in its life. At the very least your puppy will have had its litter mates for company as well as possibly mum. This means that when you bring your puppy home and plan to 'start as you mean to go on' this can be very hard on young puppies who simply feel alone, with strangers and in a strange place. The quickest way to settle your puppy into his new home overnight and encourage positive housetraining experiences too, is consider initially having the puppy up in the bedroom with you. Set up a little crate perhaps next to your bed so that they can still hear you and see you if they get upset but encourage them to settle. This can be the quickest way to help them out when they need to go to the toilet in the night too. You can hear them when they are getting restless and quickly carry them out to the toilet and settle them back to bed. Remember that their bladders are very small and, as they should always have a fresh water supply, you may find you are getting up 3 or 4 times a night initially. Do not fear as it will be worth it! Once your puppy is feeling more secure you can start to move them downstairs. In summary, you are basically bringing home a new baby so can expect all the sleepless nights that come with that experience.

Training and Socialising

If we were to write instructions on every aspect of training and socialising we would be accidentally writing a book, so for the sake of this care leaflet we will keep it brief. Your puppy needs to be trained, because if not it will continue to chew, bite, piddle on your floor, and eat off your plate. Training a puppy is **HARD WORK**, and they do not train themselves. Seek advice, read books, ask trainers, or even ask us! Puppy classes are great, but just remember a class lasting an hour a week for six weeks will not produce for you a trained and socialised dog at the end all on its own. What it will do is give you the tools, advice and guidance, for you to train and socialise your puppy every day in-between those classes and beyond, and that is how you end up with a great dog. With puppies you really do get back what you put in. The main thing is to make sure you make training **FUN**. That means positive reinforcement only, reward for the things you want, don't shout and yell for the things you don't. You will then have a truly strong happy friendship with your dog, rather than one where your dog is only behaving out of



fear. Punishment based, or negative reinforcement is not a great foundation for ‘friendship’ and is not the way forward if you want a happy, healthy dog.

Feeding

Speak to your vet about diet options for your puppy. Initially you should continue to feed them on what they have been weaned on prior to you collecting them. They should be fed a minimum of 3 times a day, more if they are particularly small and should always have access to fresh water. Don't change their diet suddenly, and please don't provide them with any sort of milk unless advised by a vet as it will upset their tummy.

Keep your feeding routine to the same times each day and this will help you with your housetraining. If the feeding routine is the same, the toileting times won't be too variable either and this will help set you up for success.

If you have a busy household, perhaps with young children, encourage good manners from all involved so that the puppy is left to eat its meals in peace and quiet.

Children

Having a new puppy in the family can be a very exciting time for everyone, especially any little people in the household. While your puppy is small it is easy for the children to pick it up, carry it around and generally do what they want with the puppy (within reason!). But this is still a dog that needs to learn lots of things in the world and also is a living creature who has emotions and feelings too. They might not want to be picked up! Encourage your children to get involved with training from the very start so that everyone, adults and children alike, is setting the pup up to be a well-rounded member of the family. Within a matter of weeks the puppy is going to be teething and will become more ‘mouthy’ as he explores the environment with his sore teeth and gums. Set the boundaries for how the puppy should be handled by the children from day one to help the whole family through the early weeks and months.

In summary

Is taking on a puppy an exciting time?

Will it be tiring and hard work?

Will it all be worth it providing you put the work in?

Absolutely it is!

You bet it will be!

Without a doubt!

So align your expectations with reality and enjoy your potbellied, stumpy-legged bundle of fluff, because before you know it, it will have shot up into a gangly great teenager, and that's where the fun really begins!

Hope we helped!!