

Weekly Growth Stages

Week 1 & 2 - neonatal period

Your bitch is the main influence on the pups at this time. Her attitude toward the pups and the people who come to look at them will influence behavior development. If she is overly fearful or aggressive, this can be imprinted on the puppies.

Week 3 - transitional period

The beginning of the Socialization Period. The puppy needs to be around littermates and the bitch at this time but it is very important the pups spend time with people also to build a good foundation for future socialization.

Week 4 - becoming aware

Use the "startle-reaction" test to determine the beginning of the Socialization Period for each pup. When a pup visibly reacts to a loud noise he is in the Socialization Period.

Special Note on Houstraining

Long before 7 weeks pups try to get as far away as possible from their sleeping area to poop and pee. If the breeder arranges so that the pups can get away to go potty they will keep a strong cleanliness instinct and will be easier to houstrain.

If they are penned so that they can not get away from their nest they will get over their cleanliness instinct and be difficult to houstrain.

Week 5 & 6- socialization and curiosity

At the beginning of this period the pup has little sense of fear, by the end he should be more cautious in his approach to things as he learns to discriminate sights, sounds, and smells. Isolated or overprotected pups miss this VERY key period.

Week 5 & 6- socialization and curiosity - continued

Remember that each pup will develop at a slightly different rate. By the fifth week most puppies are chasing litter mates, growling, biting, and playing.

Week 7 - behavioral refinement

Puppies can see and hear well and will investigate anything. They need to be exposed to a wide variety of sights and sounds and smells

Week 8 - the fear period

Susceptible to long lasting effects if there is a fright during this period. Loud or rough handling, sudden sharp noises, and spankings are examples of things that can have a lasting, bad effect. **Do NOT ship during this time.**

Weeks 9 thru 12 - Awareness

By the end of week 9 the pup is returning to his fearless state. Pups are developing dominant and subordinate behavior. Their motor skills are improving and they begin to learn what is the right behavior for the right time.

Mild Stress and Socialization

These are suggestions of the very bare minimum of handling that will help a pup develop properly. Mild Stress is helpful for neurological/brain development during the first few weeks, after that socialization exercises take over.

Week 1 - Mild Stress

Pick the puppy up each day. Hold him for about a minute with the puppy's body firmly supported with your hand under his tummy.

Week 2 - Mild Stress

Begin holding the pups in different positions briefly. On 1 day turn the pup in a circle to the left, the next day to the right. The next hold him upright. Then head down. On 1 day during the week put the pup in a cold room for 2 minutes

Week 3 - Mild Stress

Stress can become more specific. One day pick the puppy up and give his ear a momentary pinch between thumb and forefinger. He may cry out but should calm quickly. Another day pick him up and pinch between his front toes.

Week 4 - Mild Stress

This is a stimulating week for the pup so one stress is enough. Midway through the week take the pup from the litter and put him on a different floor surface for a few minutes. How does he react to being alone, how quickly does he cry, does he walk around or stay in one place?

Week 4 - Socialization

A few minutes of individual attention each day is important. Each puppy should be picked up, petted, and talked to.

Week 5 - Mild Stress

Provide mild auditory and visual stress. Play the radio near the home box when the pups are awake. If it sounds loud but not irritating to you it will be right. 5 minutes is enough. Repeat again later that day for another 5 minutes. Also flicker room lights for 2 or 3 minutes

Week 5 - Socialization

Spend at least 5 minutes every day holding each puppy. At least once take the puppy away from the puppy pen for about 10 minutes. Get down on the puppy's level and play. Invite new people, especially children to meet the puppies

Week 6 - Socialization

Spend at least 5 minutes every day holding each puppy. Individual attention is very critical. 10 minute play sessions apart from the litter are essential for the pup's development.

Week 7 - Socialization

Spend at least 5 minutes every day holding each puppy. In your 10 minute sessions call the puppy to you, walk and coax him to follow. Play with the puppy on his level. Pet him and talk to him. Use your voice to get him to look at you.

Weeks 8 thru 12 - Socialization

Avoid placing the puppy in a new home in week 8. Start introducing new things and environments. 15 to 20 minute visits to at least three new places are sufficient.

Brushing can become part of the puppy's routine. Begin very gradually.

Puppies should be comfortable wearing a buckle collar. Never put a choke collar on a puppy or leave a puppy with a collar unattended.

Sit, come, and fetch are all things the puppy can begin learning now. Short, gentle sessions and lots of praise are essential. Clicker Training can be started now very successfully.

Weeks 4 thru 7 - Enrichment

During this time the puppy is very busy learning to use his rapidly developing senses. It is very important that the puppies are exposed to a stimulating and rich environment.

Lawn chairs in the back yard, puppy size stairs, safe things to chew on and chase and tug-of-war with. Things with sharp edges or that can be easily shredded or swallowed shouldn't be used but otherwise feel free to experiment with objects.

Innoculations - not before 8 weeks

Canine distemper, measles, parainfluenza (CPI) Parvovirus
Continue vaccinations no closer than 3 to 4 weeks apart.

Most of the information on this sheet is condensed from How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With by Rutherford and Neil

Parvo warning - Parvo is highly contagious and even puppies who have been innoculated can become infected. A puppy should have limited contact with other dogs until 4 months.