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*Socialization; Adj. Living in an organized community; not solitary; mutual relationships of people (and dogs) or classes living in an organized community; designed for companionship and sociability.*

The fact that this definition of the word had an important place in the rearing of our canines should be obvious. We expect them to be able to live in our organized community: it is imperative that they have a mutual relationship with us if we are to live together in any harmony: and lastly they are the best companion known to man.

If we are to achieve this socialization with our puppies – yes. PUPPIES – let's take a look at the proper method to approach socialization. First, we need to comprehend the critical stages of development in dogs. I had the privilege to belong to a group that sponsored a lecture by Dr. John Paul Scott several years ago. Since the work he and Dr. Fuller completed at Bar Harbor, Maine is literally the "bible" for understanding dog behavior; we need to heed his advice.

"The time (for socialization) is short – from 21 to 112 days in all thirteen weeks all together) – and once it is gone it can never be retrieved. The implications of what this short time means in the development of a dog are so great that it behooves puppy raisers to employ this time wisely. It can never be made up at an older age. As different as are the inheritances of different breeds of dogs, all, will reach a satisfactory level of behavior. Social relations are formed through the process of learning. They begin at a point

where the first capacity for learning appears. It is important to remember that, while previous learning may be altered by subsequent learning, subsequent learning will never obliterate previous learning."

These are powerful statements! To examine these critical stages, we need to identify them.

First stage: Birth to 20 days, then to seven weeks. From birth to 20 days, the critical element for puppies in this crucial stage is survival. The needs are for warmth, food, sleep, and massage. At 21 days the puppies can see fairly well, smell and hear. Now environment comes into play. This should begin his formal socialization. Breeders need to introduce each puppy to the outside world slowly. The puppy can be handled and taught to form attachments to people. This stage develops until the seventh week when the puppy has the capacity of a grown dog but not the experience. The puppy socializes with its littermates and with its mother during this critical period. Attachments towards other dogs are formed.

Puppies learn bite inhibition from the bitch first, then from their littermates. If they bite the bitch, she usually gives them a "scruff shake", which means that she grabs the loose skin around their neck and gives a shake. Puppies understand this reprimand COMPLETELY! No problem; the next time they are careful. Play with littermates involves biting, jumping, growling, and general roughhousing. They learn from each other that biting hurts and that no littermates will play with them unless they "learn the rules".

To remove a puppy before the completion of this period deprives him of canine socialization and often

when becoming an adult this dog will pick fights with almost all strange dogs he meets. Play fighting has an important meaning during this stage. Puppies deprived of this stage will almost always develop behavior problems. Usually a "pecking order" of dominance is established during these weeks.

The third stage is from eight weeks to eleven weeks and is the best time for relationships with his owner. Considerable teaching can be done during this period and this lays the foundation for his education. Breeders should understand these critical periods and their responsibility to their puppies and new owners by shaping the inherent characteristics of their specific breed. For working breeds this is imperative! This is, then, the ideal time to relocate a new puppy with his new owner; however, care should be taken to avoid any traumatic or painful or frightening experience during this period. If exposed to these kinds of events, they will have a much more lasting effect on the puppy than if they occurred at another period.

Certainly breeds that crop ears should postpone this type of surgery till at least twelve weeks of age. During his first visit to your veterinarian, make certain that the visit is a pleasant one: have treats available for the doctor to give your puppy. Lots of hands-on petting and praising!

The fourth period, from twelve weeks to sixteen weeks, sometimes referred to as the "seniority classification period", is the age at which puppies begin to try their own wings, to begin to try a step towards independence. It has commonly been referred to as the "cutting" period; cutting the apron strings from



their mother and also cutting teeth! Bite inhibition should be taught NOW if not instituted earlier. During this period the "top dog" or leader of the pack is determined. If a puppy stays with the breeder in a kennel situation and does not receive ADEQUATE SOCIALIZATION during this period, one can never expect him to become a social companion. Once training and socialization is lost or omitted during this period, there are no "make up" sessions that influence the puppy. Heed the advice of DR. Scott. "The time is so short from 21 to 112 days in all (thirteen weeks altogether) – and once it is gone, it can never be retrieved!"

The next period is called the flight instinct period, marked by the puppy beginning to "take off" when called. He acts as though he knows nothing of the play recall you have practiced. This troublesome period may last from weeks to a month.

The second period of fear imprint runs from approximately six months to fourteen months. This period is not as definitive as the first period; but you may notice he is suddenly fearful of new things. At times he expresses fear with familiar things: be patient. Never force him to do anything that he fears: take it slow and easy.

Then, on to maturity. Usually from one to four years we may see an increase in aggression and testing of the leadership of your pack. Your dog is undergoing some psychological changes as he matures and needs your firm, but fair guidance through this last stage. But, we need to return to the seven week to sixteen week period of socialization.

**S**o, you may ask. What does this socialization involve? How can I be sure my puppy has enough socialization and training during this period to enhance his temperament and breed characteristics? Let's take a look at the many elements that go into a good socialization exercise.

**F**irst, we need to assure our puppies see, hear, feel, and experience everything they can during this period: think of it as "cramming for a final": that is to say, we try to fit all these experiences into a plan that enables the puppy to draw from these experiences in a positive manner. The reason for this socialization effort is that this is a very special time during their life: "when a small amount of experience will produce a great effect on later behavior". You should allow your puppy to familiarize himself with you daily routine before beginning these special exercises. He needs to experience other dogs, various people, city streets, et cetera. This is his chance for optimal social development.

A hypothetical scenario can be thus: Take the puppy for frequent rides in the car, preferable in a crate: for short rides if no adverse reactions, then for longer rides. After he is accustomed to the car, add a trip through your local city. It could go something like this: Park on the upper floor of a parking garage. Remove the puppy from his crate and acclimate him to his surroundings. Lift him up and allow him to see the street below. With any luck at all, the parking garage will have a glass enclosed elevator. Everything done on this trip through your city is done with a very happy, positive attitude. At no time should your puppy be frightened or intimidated. YOU supply the

motivation and the praise! (Good mother). Then, after we emerge from the elevator ride, we begin our trip through the city.

If you happen to be fortunate enough for street repair, so much the better. Jackhammers are great sounds! Normal traffic sounds prevail so they become second nature. If you doubt the wonderful spectrum of sounds you encounter, just take the time to really listen. This positive exposure to these sounds helps puppies to avoid sound sensitivity later in life. If your city has an army navy store you are in luck again! Ask if your puppy can enter the store and explain you are on a socialization exercise – works like a charm! The sales clerks all want to greet the puppy and he gains confidence in this new encounter. New people pose no threat and all offer him a treat (supplied by you, of course).

Then after that bouquet of aromas in that store we are off to other adventures. If your city has a bridge over a body of water, incorporate that in this exercise. Puppies experience the feel of the grating, metal and cement of the bridge, the feel of traffic crossing the bridge and , if you are fortunate, things like flags flapping in the breeze. Permit them to stop and examine everything: they usually want to take a glance at the water below.

On to other neat experiences! As you travel through the city, if strangers wish to greet your puppy, stop, give instructions and a treat, and watch the results. Puppies learn to greet other people in a positive manner. Why not? They bring treats and they are so kind! Continue your travels to include trips to every kind of situation that is available. Be imaginative! Stop at a fast food restaurant for a drink and





let the puppy become accustomed to lying quietly by your side. Our city has a complex of buildings built in close proximity to a river and our trips include exploring the river! No trip would be complete without a workout at a playground. Take advantage of posts: walk "figure eights" around two or three posts: climb up the sliding board and hold your puppy in your lap and slide down. Now you are certain to attract some onlookers and perhaps a puzzled look or two. I usually stop and explain myself and almost always they remain to watch with glee as an adult, supposedly of sound mind "does" the playground with a puppy!

If there are other things to explore, do so! Go to parks and walk through. Our local park has several lakes, two tennis courts, a golf course (the only free golf course in the country!) and paths for Par-course. Use whatever is out there: take several of these excursions.

**W**e recently had the advantage of a full-service touring bus, complete with all the amenities – and for our dogs! The husband of one of our instructors is employed by a bus company and the owners willingly allowed us to use the bus for a training session. Our trip included a stop at a large shopping mall for a walk-through. You can imagine the looks we got when the dogs emerged from the bus! So you see, you are limited only by your own imagination.

Remember Dr. Scott's words. Once this period is gone, you can never recover it. Breeders: do you give this vital information to each and every new purchaser of your puppies that are not in new homes by seven weeks? Trainers: are you exposing

each puppy to all these experiences during these critical periods of development? Pet owners: these rules apply to YOU ALSO. Each and every puppy deserves the training to become the best companion possible. Obedience people: have you taken the time to study Pfaffenberger, Scott, Fuller and other on the critical periods of development? Do you teachers offer this information to potential students? Will you take the time to educate a new puppy owner even though they may not attend your course?

**U**nice again, Dr. Scott, "As different as are the inheritance of different breeds of dogs, all, when given proper socialization from three weeks of age to sixteen weeks of age, will reach a satisfactory level of behavior. Social relations are formed through the process of learning. They begin at a point where the first capacity for learning appears. It is important to remember that **WHILE PREVIOUS LEARNING MAY BE ALTERED BY SUBSEQUENT LEARNING, SUBSEQUENT LEARNING WILL NEVER OBLITERATE PREVIOUS LEARNING.**"

It was truly an experience of a lifetime to sit and listen and discuss things with Dr. Scott. We were so fortunate to reach him and to convince him to speak to dog trainers! His teachings will be forever etched in our minds.