



PUPPY SOCIALIZATION

Why socialization is so important: Socialization is the process by which a puppy develops relationships with others, be it people, cats, birds or other dogs. By introducing your puppy to as many different things and sounds as possible, you are helping him to become a happy, secure, confident dog who will interact with all types of people and handle unique situations appropriately. Proper socialization can help him to not be afraid of new objects or sounds, to enjoy meeting new people and to want to play with a variety of other dogs.

The first 2 to 4 months of a puppy's life are the most important to the success of his social development. What happens to a pup during this key socialization time can oftentimes affect how he copes with changes and novelties for the rest of his life.

Preventative training is the magic key to mastering difficult situations. It is much easier to prevent a problem now versus attempting to cure an issue later.

Good socialization includes these experiences:

- Meeting new people: men, women, children and babies of all ages and nationalities.
- Meeting people wearing hats, walking with canes or walkers, jogging or pushing strollers.
- Meeting other pets of all types, ages and breeds (be sure they are friendly).
- Hearing loud noises: cars, trucks, horns, sirens, thunder, firecrackers and other
- everyday sounds.

Familiarizing puppies to the world:

All puppies need to grow accustomed to seeing and hearing things like vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, pots and pans, traffic caution barrels, etc. before they reach the critical age of 16 weeks. After 16 weeks, puppies can begin to develop fear responses at the sight and/or sound of new things, and it can be much more difficult to change their minds about their fears. Keeping a puppy isolated from other puppies and people until he is past 16 weeks old is like keeping a child in isolation until the age of 7 years.

What you should do while your puppy is young:

- Touch your puppy all over. Reward him with special treats while you are handling his ears, tail, mouth, tummy, etc. Get him used to being touched and held. Reward him with tasty treats for being still and allowing the touches.
- Play with your puppy's feet, gently squeeze his toes and hold his paws. This helps to accustom him to having his paws handled. Reward him when he lets you hold his paw without struggling.
- Brush his feet, under his legs, his belly, head, ears, tail, etc. Teach your puppy to enjoy being groomed. Reward him during and after each pleasant grooming session.
- Hold your puppy gently in a seated position. Reward him for sitting calmly.
- Teach your puppy to make eye contact. Hold a treat near your face. Reward him when he looks into your eyes.

To properly introduce your puppy to new things:

- Put enough distance between your puppy and the new thing so that the puppy is comfortable.
- Stay relaxed and cheerful. Have fun!
- Offer treats and toys to your puppy while at a “safe” distance from the new thing.
- Slowly decrease the distance between your puppy and the new thing. Always give terrific treats whenever the new thing is present.
- Make sure not to rush or force your puppy if he is fearful or unsure – always proceed at his pace.
- Puppies should be rewarded with treats if they show interest in investigating new objects.

Preventing anxiety:

- Don't allow your puppy to follow you "everywhere" at home. Sometimes give your puppy a terrific treat or special toy then close a door between you and him. Wait a few minutes and then calmly open the door.
- Always exercise your puppy before leaving him alone.
- Don't make a big fuss when you leave or come home. Leave quickly and quietly.
- Leave a radio or television on when you are gone.
- Practice leaving your puppy by himself frequently for short periods. Start by only being gone a few minutes. Repeat at varying intervals, increasing the length of time gone.
- Go through your routine as if you were going to leave, then stay home. Repeat at varying intervals and times. This can help to prevent your pup from getting upset when it looks like you are going to leave.

Puppy class should be fun!

An excellent way to socialize your puppy is to attend a quality puppy socialization class. Puppy classes should have puppies of similar ages - less than 20 weeks old. This provides for an environment where puppies can play and learn together. The classes should be held in a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere, so that everyone, human and canine, can enjoy the experience. Choose a puppy class that utilizes humane, positive reinforcement training methods and avoids harsh physical punishments.

For additional information regarding pet behavior and training, please **visit our website at michiganhumane.org**.