

THE ANIMAL CARE CENTER AT GRANVILLE PUPPY KINDERGARTEN MODULE 3

TOPICS COVERED

- A. Trimming nails
- B. Cleaning ears
- C. Brushing teeth
- D. Walking on leash in "Heel" position
 - 1. Attention focusing
 - 2. Turns
- E. Puppy imprinting--the Stand command
- F. Riding in a car
 - 1. Safety
 - 2. Car sickness
- G. Continue elevation--table
- H. Removing toys and other objects from mouth
- I. Spay and neuter--when and why
- J. Teaching yard boundaries/containment

INTRODUCTION TO MODULE 3

The first section of this lesson builds on the handling and walking lessons from weeks one and two. Actual grooming techniques will be learned by the pet owner. Additionally, walking the pup in a more formal position, the heel, will be started based on the leash walking exercises from lesson 2. Continued imprinting techniques addressing stand will be covered, as well as additional helpful techniques for car travel and veterinary examination.

TRIMMING NAILS

At this point the puppy should be very comfortable with having his feet, including toes, pads, and in between handled. It is now time to progress to trimming his nails. It is imperative to accustom the pup to a regular nail trimming routine. The dog's foot was designed to walk on the pad. If the nails become too long, the dog will walk on his nails instead of his pads, forcing the toes upward and the heel of the foot down. The toes become splayed, the dog's natural gait is altered, and walking can become very painful. Additionally, dew claws that are not regularly trimmed may curve and grow into the dog's leg, causing infection. You should never be able to hear a dog's nails click on a hard floor--if you do, the nails are typically too long.

There are two types of nail clippers available. The guillotine type has replaceable blades should they become dull. The pliers type does not. Although either is acceptable, it is usually easier to see the angle of cut using guillotine clippers.

Inside the nail is a "quick" or blood supply. By feeling the underside of the nail, you should be able to find a hollow portion just beyond the curve of the nail that runs to the tip. This hollow part may be clipped away safely without cutting the quick. Light colored nails are more translucent and the nail bed is visible, while black nails can be a bit more intimidating. Clip only the hollow tip away. Routine trimming every 2 weeks should keep the nails short and in good shape. Be careful not to cut the nail back too far. Cutting the quick is painful and will make the dog shy about having his nails trimmed at all. Should an accident occur, styptic powder or flour may be applied to stop the bleeding. It is helpful to have someone steady the pup when trimming the nails. Do not hold the foot too tightly or the pup may try to pull his foot away. Always praise the puppy as you trim, and perhaps reward with a treat when the job is complete.

CLEANING EARS

A dog's ears should be inspected routinely for signs of mites or infection. Redness in the ear, odor, a red, brown, or black waxy buildup, or frequent head-shaking are all signs of possible ear infections or ear mite problems. A veterinarian should treat these issues as soon as they are discovered to prevent more severe ear problems such as hearing loss. There are some commercial ear cleaners on the market that work well in a bi-weekly maintenance program, but check with your veterinarian to make sure the product you are considering is acceptable for a young puppy. To clean the ear, moisten a cotton ball with the solution and gently wipe the inner portion of the ear. You may follow with a dry cotton ball to absorb excess moisture. Routine inspections will help stop serious ear infections before they start.

TEETH

A dog gets two sets of teeth just like humans do. They begin to shed their puppy teeth anywhere between 3-4 months, beginning with the small lower front incisors. Although dental caries (cavities) are generally not a serious problem for dogs, periodontal disease (disease of the gum tissue and the supporting bone around the teeth) is. Dogs accumulate calculus (tartar) deposits on their teeth just like humans, and, just like us, some build up deposits much more quickly than others. When tartar deposits occur on your pet's teeth, they must be professionally removed by your veterinarian to prevent tooth loss and infection. Brushing your dog's teeth with a soft toothbrush or fingertip and toothpaste made especially for dogs will help keep teeth and gums healthy. The exercises in the previous lessons should have accustomed your pup to having his mouth examined, so having his teeth brushed should become a pleasant experience for him. Some toys are very hard on teeth, including cow hooves and the Galileo type nylon bone. Dogs can break or splinter teeth when chewing these objects and it is suggested they not be given to your pet. Some animals insist on chewing rocks and sticks which can also wear and break teeth. Items such as these should be removed as soon as the puppy picks them up.

WALKING ON A LEASH IN "HEEL" POSITION

Now that your puppy has mastered the concept of walking on a leash in the same direction as you, it is time to begin to establish more control and help him learn to walk at your side. In heel position, the dog's eye is nearly in line with the seam of your pants. The dog walks on your left side on a slack leash with no lunging, pulling, or balking. The first step towards this goal is attention focusing. Keeping in mind that puppies do have short attention spans, these sessions should be kept short and happy. Hold the leash in your right hand and a treat in your left. Show the pup the treat and then close your hand around it. Holding the treat out and above the pup's nose, say "Watch me" and click to him as you walk forward. Praise briefly and keep walking. If the pup becomes distracted, give a quick tug on the leash, wave the treat under his nose while saying "No, watch me" while returning the hand with the treat out and above his nose. Once he can walk this way in a straight line, begin adding turns. You will need to use body language by patting your leg to encourage him to keep up, and possibly click to him too. Practice turning BOTH directions as well as making 180 degree turns and reversing your direction. Changing the speed you walk is also important.

THE STAND COMMAND

This command becomes very useful at the groomer's, the veterinarian's, or in the show ring. The puppy should learn to stand on command for examination. Initially, it will be taught on the floor and then applied to a higher elevation, such as a grooming table. Put the puppy in a sitting position, and then say "Stand" as you gently slide your hand under his belly and lift him to his feet. It is helpful to have the leash on your puppy for this exercise. Keep repeating the word stand as you praise him for this position. You may also hold a treat in your right hand, held against your palm by your thumb. Start over the top of the pup's head, and say "Stand" as you bring your hand down past his eyes, across his nose, and out in front of him which should cause him to rise from the sit position and step forward into a stand to reach the treat. Remember to praise!

RIDING IN A CAR/CAR SAFETY/CAR SICKNESS

It is always enjoyable to have a dog accompany you on car trips. However, there are several guidelines that must be followed in order to insure the safety of both you and your puppy when riding in a car. First, a dog SHOULD NEVER be permitted to ride in the back of a pickup truck unless crated and the crate strapped securely in the open bed. And, although dogs love to ride with their heads out of car windows and their ears flying in the wind, this is a dangerous practice for two reasons. First, debris could strike the dog in the eyes, and the excess air blowing in his face may eventually damage his sense of smell. Secondly, dogs can jump through very small openings in car windows should they desire. If you are in an accident and the dog is not contained in your car, he has an excellent chance of being thrown through a windshield. There are harnesses that attach to a car's seatbelt system for dogs, or you have the option of transporting him in a crate. It is never a good idea to allow the dog to roam the interior of a car while you are driving. He could cause you to have an accident by blocking your vision, jumping on your lap, or getting on the floor around your feet and the gas and brake pedals.

Car sickness can affect animals just like humans. Typically, it is wise NOT to feed a puppy an hour or so before a car trip. It is also important that the puppy take many trips during his key socialization period, going to fun places on short jaunts. It is important that the dog not only get in the car to go to the veterinarian's or groomer's. Keep the rides short--such as accompanying you to pick the children up after ball practice. However, do not, under ANY circumstances, leave the puppy unsupervised or alone in the car. He may become frightened at being left alone, or, worse yet, stolen. Also, it is absolutely critical that any animal never be left in a hot car. Even on a 70 degree day with the windows down a few inches, the interior may heat to 120 degrees in the space of a few minutes and cause heat stroke and death. A dog who is frightened of car rides may easily become car sick due to the stress of the trip. He may, over a slow conditioning process, be retrained to ride in the car. Severe cases may require medication from your veterinarian when a car trip is necessary.

The most important thing about car riding you will ever teach your puppy is when to get into and out of the car. Walk him up to your car and require the sit position. Insist that he maintain the sit while you open the door and place anything you are carrying inside. When YOU are ready, allow him to jump into the car by saying "Jump" or "Hup." If he is very small, you will have to lift him into the car, but still use one of the commands so he begins to learn what it means. More importantly, you must teach him when it is appropriate to exit the car. This simple exercise could save his life someday. Release him from his seatbelt harness or open the crate door, but REQUIRE him to WAIT until you say it is okay for him to continue out of the car. You must be consistent with this exercise--NO EXCEPTIONS!

CONTINUED ELEVATION

We will continue these exercises by placing the puppy on a grooming table or a veterinary examination table. The purpose is to make the pup feel comfortable when required to sit or stand at a different height. MAKE SURE that the puppy does NOT ever fall off the table. Place the pup on the table. To begin the exercise, one with a rubber or rough surface is preferred. Steady the pup with your hands and use the puppy imprinting techniques you have learned to build the puppy's confidence. Begin with the sit and progress to the down, always praising the puppy for correct actions. You may also begin to practice the stand command on a table. He may be more nervous or insecure on the slippery tabletop (which is very much like a veterinary examination table) so gently steady him under his abdomen to keep his feet from sliding out from under him. By using a food treat and steadying him with your other hand, you should be able to get him to stand well on the smooth surface as well as the textured one. Make his time on the table fun--praise him and pet him, but do NOT hover over him and coddle him. This may make him fearful of being on the table. Rather, make it a positive experience by brushing the pup or practicing the imprinting commands of sit, down, and stand. It is important that he be confident enough to do these on any surface.

REMOVING TOYS FROM THE MOUTH

Puppies are very much like small children in that everything goes into their mouths. Many times these items are inappropriate or dangerous and must be removed before the pup swallows the object. It is important then to teach your pup when to drop an object on command. At first, and especially with more dominant puppies, you will have to teach him to allow you to physically remove the object. Straddle the dog, facing the same direction, and take his muzzle in both hands, with one positioned on top and one on the bottom of the jaw. The command we will begin using is "Thank you" which will mean (to the dog) "open your mouth and let me take this out" or, eventually, "drop it". While you steady the lower jaw with one hand, slide the fingers and thumb of the other down the sides of his lips, pressing firmly against his teeth. As you reach the edges of his top teeth and he begins to open slightly, curl his upper lips UNDER the edges of his top teeth and push. He will not be able to close down and bite you because he will bite into his upper lips, which will be quite painful. While holding his upper jaw in this position, quickly reach in with the hand holding the lower jaw and remove the object as you say "Thank you" in a happy tone. Then praise him as you release the upper lips and slide this hand back up his muzzle to the top of his head in a petting motion as you close his mouth. This should be practiced on a regular basis even if the dog has nothing in his mouth. It will help teach him to allow his mouth to be examined or to have medication in the form of pills placed down his throat.

SPAYING AND NEUTERING--WHEN AND WHY

We all grow to love our pets and often think that we might wish to breed our animal to have a puppy to replace the older parent. Many people think that because they have a dog that "has papers" (in other words, is registered) that it SHOULD be bred because being registered guarantees that it is a good dog. Some people wish to allow their children to experience the "miracle of birth" while others look upon it as a money making proposition. Some people believe a female dog should have at least one heat or one litter before spaying, and some with male dogs "just couldn't imagine doing that to my dog" or that since it's a male, unwanted puppies are the problem of the female dog owner. All of these ideas, and many more not mentioned here, are untrue. Pet overpopulation is a serious, heartbreaking problem in this country, with approximately **12 MILLION** unwanted dogs and cats being euthanized in shelters and humane

societies alone yearly. This does not include the numbers put to sleep in veterinarians' offices and other sources. Our tax dollars that perhaps could be well spent in other areas are needed and used to fund these programs BECAUSE IRRESPONSIBLE PET OWNERS require them to exist. Current statistics show that if every dog and every cat in this country who needed a home had one right now, **EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD OF ANY AGE WOULD EACH OWN 8 DOGS AND 41 CATS** (that's a total of 32 dogs and 124 cats for a family of four!) ANY animal who is not going to be shown in conformation classes at licensed dog shows should be spayed or neutered at the age of 6 MONTHS. Females should be spayed before their first heat--the fewer heats she has, the lower the risk of reproductive cancers later on in life. A heat period lasts THREE WEEKS and every dog in the neighborhood (or your household) will be on edge during it. Fights can be common in a multiple dog household in addition to the mess. Remember that puberty kicks in right around 6-7 months of age. As this begins the terrible teenage period for a dog and attitudes and unwanted behaviors can escalate at this time, early spaying and neutering can have a great impact on this problem. Male dogs who are neutered at 6 months (before their hormones kick in) become excellent family pets that become focused on their families--not every female in season in the neighborhood. It also decreases the desire to roam as well as the annoying territorial marking that intact male dogs exhibit. A neutered male dog cannot develop testicular cancer. The act of introducing a litter of puppies into the world is a lifetime responsibility, not just yours until the pups leave their mother. Unless you are well schooled in the art and science of genetics, whelping, and all the sad and horrifying things that CAN happen during the delivery process, it is best to leave that to seasoned professionals. Be a responsible pet owner--one of the greatest acts of love and kindness you can provide for your pet is a spay or neuter surgery.

TEACHING YARD BOUNDARIES AND CONTAINMENT

One of the greatest mistakes pet owners make it to assume that their animal will know where their yard boundaries are. Because WE know that a certain shrub marks the line between our property and our neighbor's, we assume the dog will know as well--just as we seem to expect him to know the curb marks the end of the yard and the asphalt the street! Many unnecessary tragedies occur based on this assumption.

A young puppy, when you first bring him home, will probably not go far from your side when you take him outdoors. As his confidence grows (and especially when he reaches puberty) his sense of independence grows as well. Therefore, it is necessary to take him out ON a leash or allow him to be out in a fenced yard. It is better to supervise him even in the fenced area due to the increase in pet thefts throughout the country. There are a variety of fences available, but be sure the one you have is in good repair with no holes the pup can escape through or no weak latches on gates. (If you have children you must continually remind them to keep the gates shut and latched, or you may wish to purchase locks for the gates.) The underground wire fence is probably the least expensive, but remember that it does not keep other animals or children OUT of your yard. A very excited dog can run right through the charge on the fence if it wants to, and time must be taken to use the white flags and teach the boundaries of the wire. Cables and tie-outs are an alternative, but a large, strong dog has been known to readily pull even a spiral stake out of the ground. With time, boundary training can be incorporated into obedience training, but no dog should EVER be left out in an unfenced area unsupervised and expected to come home. A leash is still your safest and best option!