

# Socialization of Puppy

## Socialization Before Final Vaccinations:

Socializing a puppy before it has been fully immunized can be a scary dilemma for new puppy parents. While it is very important to start socializing the puppy right away, there is still the fear of exposing your new puppy to illnesses or deadly diseases.

As experiences during the first year of a dog's life make all the difference to future temperament and character, taking the time to socialise your puppy can result in a friendly adult dog that enjoys the company of people, can be taken anywhere and lives life to the fullest.

The socialization period is a developmental stage of all puppies that lasts from 3 weeks through approximately 14 weeks, sometimes a little longer. This is the time in the pup's life when he is most open to new experiences, exploring the world, and learning what is safe and what is not. If a puppy is exposed to all manner of people, dogs, noises, smells, sights, sounds, surfaces to walk on, and so on during this period, he is much more likely to be happy and confident as he matures.

But.....you know that your puppy is not fully protected until his 14-16 week vaccines, and that there is some worrisome overlap with his critical socialization period. So how can a puppy owner protect their puppy and provide the socialization that is vital to building a confident and well-balanced canine without putting him at unnecessary risk of illness? With caution and creativity! Keep in mind that there is no way to be 100% sure your puppy will not get parvo – you could bring it into the house on your feet. *However, the risk of parvo with careful socialization is **much** lower than the risk of serious behavior problems with no socialization.* Here are some general guidelines to safe socialization:

### The Do's:

- Host a meet and greet just for your new puppy. Invite your family and friends over to meet your new family member and while they are there, be sure to play some music and let them pet your puppy. Ask them to remove their shoes before coming inside.
- Be sure your pup meets your cat and other animals that he will need to be comfortable around. Gentle exposure can help your pup learn that they are not something scary!
- Going to friends' houses, with or without dogs, as long as the dogs are healthy, vaccinated, and puppy-friendly. Also check that there have been no sick puppies at the house in the past year.
- Take the puppy with you to school to pick up/drop off the kids. Keep him up in your arms but let the kids shower him with treats.
- If your work is dog-friendly, consider bringing your puppy to work with you, or stopping by at lunch or on your day off to visit with your coworkers.
- Take a trip to the mall. Visit stores that allow dogs. Try to carry or place your pup in a cart. Think home improvement stores, banks, clothing stores, outdoor stores... ask the cashier as you come in if it's ok. Usually people love seeing puppies!
- Carrying or using a stroller to take a walk through your neighborhood or city
- Take your puppy on plenty of car rides and visit places such as the car wash, fast food drive thru, and to see other animals and wildlife.
- Arrange play dates with other puppies and dogs that you are confident are free from disease.

- Expose your puppy to music, sounds, TV, vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, washing machine, balloons, alarm clock, other appliances and things that make strange noises. Gently expose your pup while he is enjoying a stuffed Kong or another great chew.
- Take a trip to the market and just like when you went to the mall, allow your puppy to sit in a cart and watch the cars, people, people pushing carts, carrying grocery bags, and riding scooters.
- Even though we do not recommend puppy socialization classes prior to confirming that the puppy is in fact fully vaccinated (either by second round of vaccinations or titer testing), some experts believe that the benefits of puppy socialization classes are worth the risk of contracting disease since the lack of socialization contributes to the many behavior problems that are daily landing thousands of young dogs in animal shelters and at risk for euthanasia. The best puppy classes are those that require proof of vaccines and take place indoors on surfaces that are easily cleaned and sanitized. Classes held at dog parks and other grass and dirt areas can harbor deadly disease and should be avoided by young pups (and their owners while their dog is building immunity).

*Remember, it is the quality of the exposure that counts (not the quantity!). Your pup doesn't need to have prolonged or close contact with new things or people. He just needs to have easy, happy, experiences. The more relaxed your pup is, the better.*

Help your pup be relaxed and calm. Hold him in your arms if that is calming. Talk to him in soft and gentle tones. Give him treats. Keep him a little bit away from things so he can watch from a comfortable distance until he is ready to explore.

### **The Don'ts:**

- allowed to mix with dogs of unknown vaccination status

**Please, don't ever take your new puppy to any of the following places until you know that he/she is fully immunized.**

- Dog parks
- City parks
- Beaches
- Walking down the street/sidewalk on a leash
- Neighborhood parks (unless carried or in a stroller of some kind)
- Doggie daycare or boarding kennels
- Pet stores
- Grooming shops
- Humane societies or animal rescue organizations
- Parking lot at the vet

At the end of the socialization period, your puppy should be exposed to:

- Kids/children/babies
- Strollers/wagons/carts
- Adults/young/old/all ethnicities

- Bikes/skates
- Wheelchairs/handicapped people
- Hats/uniforms/jackets/capes
- Beards/glasses
- Delivery people
- Loud noises/music
- Dancing/clapping/cheering
- Dogs/puppies
- Shiny floors/wood/tile/carpet
- Stairs
- Weather/rain/snow/wet grass
- Cars/traffic
- And things specific to your environment.

## **The AVSAB Puppy Socialization Position Statement**

This statement from the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behaviour hopes to increase awareness of the need for socialization in puppies and raise the issue of how vaccination protocols affect the socialization process in puppy classes.

[https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy\\_Socialization\\_Position\\_Statement\\_Download\\_-\\_10-3-14.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy_Socialization_Position_Statement_Download_-_10-3-14.pdf)

We still have very mixed feeling when it comes to attending a puppy class prior to being fully immunized and really feel that there are many other things that you can do to still effectively socialize a puppy. It is worth noting that these classes can still be very beneficial, and we really do recommend them as soon as the vaccinations are completed. This still allows several weeks for the puppy to enjoy some puppy classes on top of all the socialization that you have already started.

## **ENS - Early Neurological Stimulation**

We use the ENS program for all our puppies which will help and give the puppies a better start in socialization and stress management.

ENS was developed by the U.S. Military for their canine program. The military learned that early neurological stimulation exercises could have important and lasting effects.

Their studies confirmed that there are specific time periods early in life when neurological stimulation has optimum results. The first period involves a window of time that begins at the third day of life and lasts until the sixteenth day. It is believed that because this interval of time is a period of rapid neurological growth and development, and therefore is of great importance to the individual.

The workouts required handling them one at a time while performing a series of five exercises. Listed in order of preference, the handler starts with one pup and stimulates it using each of the five exercises. The handler completes the series from beginning to

end before starting with the next pup. The handling of each pup once per day involves the following exercises:

- Tactical stimulation (between toes)
- Head held erect
- Head pointed down
- Supine position
- Thermal stimulation

## **Benefits of Stimulation**

Five benefits have been observed in canines that were exposed to the Bio Sensor stimulation exercises. The benefits noted were:

- Improved cardio vascular performance (heart rate)
- Stronger heart beats
- Stronger adrenal glands
- More tolerance to stress
- Greater resistance to disease

In tests of learning, stimulated pups were found to be more active and were more exploratory than their non- stimulated littermates over which they were dominant in competitive situations.

Secondary effects were also noted regarding test performance. In simple problem solving tests using detours in a maze, the non-stimulated pups became extremely aroused, whined a great deal, and made many errors. Their stimulated littermates were less disturbed or upset by test conditions and when comparisons were made, the stimulated littermates were more calm in the test environment, made fewer errors and gave only an occasional distress sound when stressed.

For more information on ENS, please see  
<http://www.angelfire.com/fl/alaturka/imgArticles/ENS.pdf>