

## Socializing = Top Priority!

The dog training/working committee cannot stress the importance of Socializing enough. It should be every dog handler's top priority.

The sad truth is that more dogs get euthanized every year due to lack of proper socializing than any dog disease out there.

### **So what is socializing?**

Socializing is introducing your dog to new situations, people, animals and stimuli in a positive manner.

Here is an example of 15 things that a dog should be socialized with, of course the list is longer in real life, but it gives you an idea of what you should be thinking of when you are socializing your dog:

1. People of all ages
2. People of all colors
3. People in different circumstances, example: people with canes, teenagers with baggy pants, people in uniform
4. Different breeds of dogs
5. Different kinds of animals
6. Balloons
7. Vacuum cleaner
8. Kitchen Noises
9. Traffic Noises
10. Grass
11. Sand
12. Hardwood
13. Concrete
14. Lake
15. Hair dryer

### **What age should I socialize my dog?**

Experts seem to agree that the best socialising age is up to 16 weeks, so it actually starts at your breeders home, as soon as they open their eyes and start hearing, so it is important that you get your pup from a reliable breeder.

After 16 weeks you can still socialize your dog but it will take a lot more time and a whole lot more patience to do so, but it is not impossible.

### **How do I socialize my dog?**

When socializing your dog remember that you are the pack leader and should set an example for your dog. Your dog will be looking at you as to how to behave in any new situation.

If your dog acts fearful or suspicious do not coddle your dog, your dog will see it as praise and figure it reacted correctly in that situation.

Do not discipline your dog when fearful or suspicious, your dog will not understand and think you are an unreliable pack leader.

Never force a dog to experience something it fears. Dragging a fearful puppy around unfamiliar environments or forcing a puppy to accept petting from a stranger is not socialization. Allow the puppy to take its time in approaching anything new or in novel situations. Make small progressions by laying a trail of treats or throwing a favourite toy. Make the experience easier for the dog.

*Do the Jolly routine* : If your dog is fearful do the Jolly routine, for example if your pup sees a fire hydrant for the first time and reacts fearful or overly cautious, you just say in a happy voice: "Silly dog! It is just a fire hydrant" and just act like you always do. DO NOT GO: Poor thing! Are you afraid? Etc, and pick your dog up, you will feed the anxiety.

*Socializing with other dogs*: When you socialize with other dogs make sure they are friendly, and have been vaccinated. If your pup feels overwhelmed and comes to stand behind you, ignore your dog and praise it when it comes out to meet the other dogs, make sure the other dogs cannot bug your dog while it is standing behind you, since your dog needs to be able to trust you to keep it safe, and when your dog realizes you are not bothered by the other dogs, most likely your dog's natural curiosity will get the better of it and will come out and say hello.

*Socializing with people*: Your dog should meet and greet at least 100 different people in the first 5 months of its life, but of course not all in one day. Do not overwhelm your dog. Take a look at the example list and meet and greet as many different kind people as you can.

If the dog is afraid to approach strangers, ask them to sit or crouch down, show the side of their body so they appear less threatening to the dog.

- 🚦 Tip: Ask people, especially children to “go bowling” when they greet or treat your stabyhoun. Meaning: going underhanded, and scratching under the chin.

When people approach a dog from above coming down from above their head, they might pull their hand away, when the dog goes towards the fingers and then the dog jumps up to grab the treat (and fingers) which is teaching the dog to jump up and can scare children.

*Think of the future!* This might sound strange, but it can really help you. For example: Do you plan to move 2-3 years from now? Then show your dog some empty boxes now.

Do you plan to start a family down the road or will grand children be part of your life in the future? See if a friend can bring a buggy over, put the buggy in a room in your house, let your puppy check it out, and walk your pup next to it.

### **Here are some more tips to help you socialize your dog:**

- 🚦 Take your dog everywhere you can: Picking the children from school, going through the drive through, pet stores etc.
- 🚦 Take a puppy class! Great way to bond with your puppy and meet other dogs (and people) in a controlled environment
- 🚦 Some dog training schools have puppy socials, where your pups can play together and the trainers are there to supervise and they can answer any questions you might have and show you what to look for to see if your pup is having fun, playing nice or is being overwhelmed

Remember Socializing is not something you can put off, sometimes people get busy and figure they will get to it later on, there is no later when it comes to socializing, the best time to do it, is right now.

Once your dog properly socialized remember to provide socialization experiences past the sensitive period or the dog may regress if not given opportunity to practice their new skills.