

Puppy Socialisation



Socialisation is the process by which a puppy learns to interact in a positive way with people and other dogs in the home and when out and about. Habituation is a similar process whereby the puppy, by repeated exposure to normal everyday things, becomes used to and learns to accept and not be frightened by them in later life. The most common cause of fear and aggression in dogs is lack of socialisation. Good socialisation therefore is the best way to ensure a friendly, well-adjusted adult dog.

The window of opportunity for effective socialisation closes at between 12-16 weeks of age. Puppies that miss out during these first important weeks of life will lack the skills they need to cope when they encounter unfamiliar people, animals and situations and may become nervous and over reactive as adults. They may become aggressive to people or other dogs; they may be fearful of sudden noises or unexpected events or they may be unruly or over excited by other animals or new situations.

Puppy socialisation involves having pleasant encounters with new people including adults of all ages, children, babies and toddlers, men with beards, people wearing hats, carrying umbrellas or walking sticks etc. and with other puppies and friendly adult dogs. Your puppy also needs to experience a wide variety of different situations and places during these early weeks.

In the weeks before he or she is fully vaccinated and able to mix safely with other dogs you can ensure that this happens by taking him out in the car, carrying him in your arms in public places and visiting friends with vaccinated dogs. It is important to arrange for as many different positive experiences as possible during this sensitive period of your puppy's life, and to continue the process regularly into adulthood to ensure the lessons he is learning stay in his mind.

To help you plan an effective program of socialisation for your puppy here is a check list for some of the more important things the puppy needs to encounter. Try to tick everything on the list each week, or use it to highlight points that need more work. Some things, for example grooming and handling, should be done every day, while experiencing a variety of new places can be arranged by going for different daily walks or outings.

All experiences must be successful and rewarding – give people tasty treats or a toy with which to interact with your puppy and if the puppy seems anxious allow him more space and freedom to approach in his own time. Remember young puppies tire easily, so keep lessons short and don't overwhelm the puppy with too much at a time.

Gentle Handling:

Head, Ears, Mouth, Neck				
Tail, Paws, Legs				
Groom with soft brush				
Use towel to dry feet/legs				
Collar				
Lead				

Meeting People:

Young adult				
Middle aged				
Elderly				
Disabled/Wheelchair				
Beard/Moustache				
Hat/Helmet/Umbrella				
Glasses				
Uniform				
Postman/delivery people				
Children: Babies				
Toddlers				
School age				
Teenagers				

Meeting Other Animals:

Adult dogs (friendly ones)				
Cats				
Rabbit/Small pet				
Horses				
Cows				
Sheep				
Chickens/ducks				

Walking on:

Grass				
Gravel				
Carpet				
Slippery surface				
Stairs				

Playing:

Soft toy				
Cardboard box				
Plastic bottle				
With people: Ball				
Tug toy				
Squeaky toy				
Chew: Nylabone				
Rubber (Kong)				
Smoked bone				

Sounds:

Vacuum cleaner				
Washing machine				
Radio/TV/Stereo				
Car engine				
Lawn mower				

Experiences:

Town/streets				
Park				
Countryside				
Crowds				
Travel in Car				
Watch passing traffic:				
Cars				
Motorbikes				
Buses				
Lorries				
Bicycles				
Trains				

Learning to be Left Alone:

Sleep in dog bed or crate away from family				
Close doors to prevent following to bathroom etc.				
Leave alone for short periods				

Both Junior Pet Club membership and our Puppy Package include regular monthly health and progress checks with the veterinary nurses and vet so that we can all make a fuss of your puppy and help to ensure that he grows up to enjoy visiting us here at Avonvale and not be afraid of coming to see us. But we'd also love to see him any time you are passing, so do pop in to say "hello"!

An excellent way to continue to socialise your puppy with people and other dogs is to join a dog training club where you can enjoy sharing experiences with other puppy owners while learning basic training techniques. To find out about classes in your area, search Dog Training Classes on the internet, or ask for our "Local Pet Services" leaflet which has details of dog training clubs local to all our surgeries.

For more information
Please contact your Avonvale Vet

Avonvale

Veterinary Centres

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 Southam: 01926 812826
 Kenilworth: 01926 854181
 Wellesbourne: 01789 841072
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www.avonvets.co.uk