



USEFUL TIPS FOR THE NEW PUPPY OWNER

INTRODUCTION:

We at **Weidenstrasse Kennels** feel it is very important for our new German shepherd puppy owners to have some guidelines in what to do and what to expect when they bring home their adorable little bundle of joy. We have received many questions from

Families and individuals who have acquired our puppies and made them part of their lives.



We are very appreciative of their observations and questions and welcome any new ideas and information.

The following provides useful information. We also urge you to learn as much as you can about canine behavior and to check out the many excellent books, articles and videos on puppy training and behavior.

It will most certainly help you in making intelligent decisions about how to interact with your new companion.



SOCIALISING YOUR NEW PUPPY

Your puppy has spent the first 7 – 8 weeks with his mother and his littermates but also with the breeder.

In many cases the breeder has started to expose the puppies to loud noises, walking on slick flooring, playing with children

letting them watch television, and might even have taken them for a drive.

Your puppy's world is one for his senses to experience and it is extremely important to continue to socialize your puppy during the first months of his life, by exposing him to different situations.

The critical socialization period for a dog is between eight and sixteen weeks of life. It is absolutely essential during this period that they experience as much as possible. Of course, some of these experiences may be a little stressful and you will have

to support your puppy during these events.

It can happen to you when taking your puppy for a walk in a quiet area that suddenly a newspaper will be blown in front of him which will startle him.

He might curiously watch – but probably a little fearfully – the newspaper as it continues to blow up against a wall. He will want to check it out but his survival instincts also tell him to run away. **DO NOT** pull him towards the paper but allow his curiosity to take over. He will probably very hesitantly move forward and if this happens **ENCOURAGE HIS BRAVERY**. Once he faces the source of his fear **MAKE A BIG FUSS OF HIM AND HE WILL THINK HE IS THE MOST COURAGEOUS CANINE ON EARTH**.

But of course should he proceed to pick up the newspaper and give it a good shake then of course **YOU MUST PRAISE HIM AGAIN**. He met his fear and overcame it. The next time he encounters a strange object he will be more confident.

Confidence begets confidence and a **CONFIDENT DOG IS A GOOD-TEMPERED DOG**.



If you ever have an experience like I mentioned above you will see what major role you play in providing this confidence.

We have provided the genetic background by breeding two excellent dogs, however you must build on this foundation.

If your puppy never leaves your property he will most certainly be fearful of life.

We all know and accept that our life styles make it difficult to spend much time with the new puppy, but we urge you to take him on outings at least 2-3 times a week. The time period does not have to be long and 15 minutes of quality time will go a long way.

We are often asked: “What if my dog is already a year old and has never left our property except to visit the Vet for his vaccinations?” It is not too late. Start today.

Should he be apprehensive of driving in the car because he associates the car with going to the Vet, be patient and start slowly. Perhaps put him in the car for a short while, let us say approx. 30 minutes, give him a treat and take him out. Gradually increase the time and start driving him around the block.

Do not scold, support and encourage him. **ONLY POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT WILL WORK**.

However, a word of caution: There are many contagious diseases such as Parvovirus which are especially dangerous to young puppies. You need to balance the importance of socialization with the risk of taking your puppy outside his home.

I do not recommend taking young puppies to public parks or other public places which many dogs frequent.

I recommend you go to shopping centers, stand outside one of the main entrances.

They will get great exposure to people, children, noises, traffic etc.

BRINGING HOME YOUR PUPPY

Can you still remember when you brought your puppy home? You just anticipated that perfect and wonderful ball of fur. You saw him being another Lassie or Rin Tin Tin responding to your every command and knowing intuitively what to do.

He will be extremely well mannered and well behaved. Some of you who have experienced the joys of owning a German Shepherd puppy will be falling on the floor laughing at this point. But believe it or not, we have many requests from people wanting a puppy that meets all these requirements.

Well, the plain and honest truth about a puppy is that if it wasn't so darn cute, you would probably kill it. Believe me, the first few days can be difficult for you and your puppy. Your puppy has been taken away from his littermates and is expected to fit right in with your way of life. You need loads of patience and a good sense of humor. If you work or are at school, it is a good idea to plan the puppy's arrival when you have a couple of days off like right before a weekend.



Remember that your puppy does not speak English. As much as you yell at him, he hasn't the foggiest notion of what you mean. He only senses you are angry, and he does not know why. You must teach him what you expect, and you must do so without harsh physical corrections. When he is doing good, you teach him that "good dog", "good boy", "good girl" are nice words with a nice sound and associated with petting, praise and/or treats.

Conversely, he learns that bad actions are associated with "no", "phooey", "bad" and have sharp disapproving verbal sounds. With some stubborn puppies, a neck scruff – like his mother would have done – is very effective in conjunction with whatever term you have decided to use for unwanted behavior. Pick a word for unwanted behavior and stay consistent with its use. If you have different words and expressions such as "get away from there," "Lex, I said stop that," "quit that," "shut-up," etc., your puppy will be confused. Make it clear, and be CONSISTENT.

Let your puppy explore on his own. Studies have shown that the 8th week is a fear period, so if you get your puppy during the 8th week, which is very common, try not to expose him to sharp noises or harsh treatment for this week. Be very patient, loving and understanding.

You should be well prepared for your new puppy. You should have decided where he is going to live, sleep and go to the bathroom. Puppies should not be given the run of the house or yard unless they are constantly supervised like you would supervise a two-year-old child. **NEVER LEAVE YOUR PUPPY IN THE HOUSE WITHOUT SUPERVISION.** They are extremely destructive. They do not know that your woodwork, couch, drapes or electrical wiring are off-limits.

They can severely injure themselves as well as destroy your home. If they are going to be kept in the house, have a “puppy proof” room for them. Remove anything from this area you do not want destroyed. This is for the puppy’s safety and your sanity.

Many folks leave puppy in the kitchen. This is fine, but remember that he can chew cabinets and woodwork just dandy. If you are going away for an hour or two, we suggest leaving your puppy in a dog crate with water and a safe toy to chew. Do not leave your puppy in the crate for long periods, but a couple of hours here and there are fine. Make sure you have allowed him to go to the bathroom before you place him in the crate. He will actually learn to like the crate and regard this area as his den. When he wants peace and quiet, he will often go to his open crates on his own. This is a place where he should not be disturbed. We’ll discuss crate training at a later stage.

If you have to leave your puppy for long hours while you are at work or school, we recommend that you provide an outside facility for him. Generous sized dog runs serve this purpose. The run must have some shade and shelter from the elements, and you should always have an ample supply of fresh water and a toy.

DOG RUNS AND DOG CRATES ARE NOT CRUEL.

They are a necessity in owning a German Shepherd. But having a crate and a run does not mean that you keep your dog in there all the time. You must spend quality time with your dog every day. Give him an early morning or late evening walk. But do not jog with a young dog. Wait until he is a year of age so his bones will have a chance to develop.

Take him to a safe area and play ball or hide and seek. Take him out tracking or start some positive obedience training. He is a little sponge, ready to soak up everything. You’ll be amazed how quickly your puppy will catch on. And it is stimulating for him and builds a stronger bond with you. If your climate permits, take him with you on short trips or errands. The highlight of his day is being with you. This is all he thinks of all day. **HE ONLY WANTS TO PLEASE YOU.**

Be ready for your puppy by planning ahead in providing a safe and secure area for him and be patient and realistic about your puppy. You will have to gently teach him the rules of his new home.

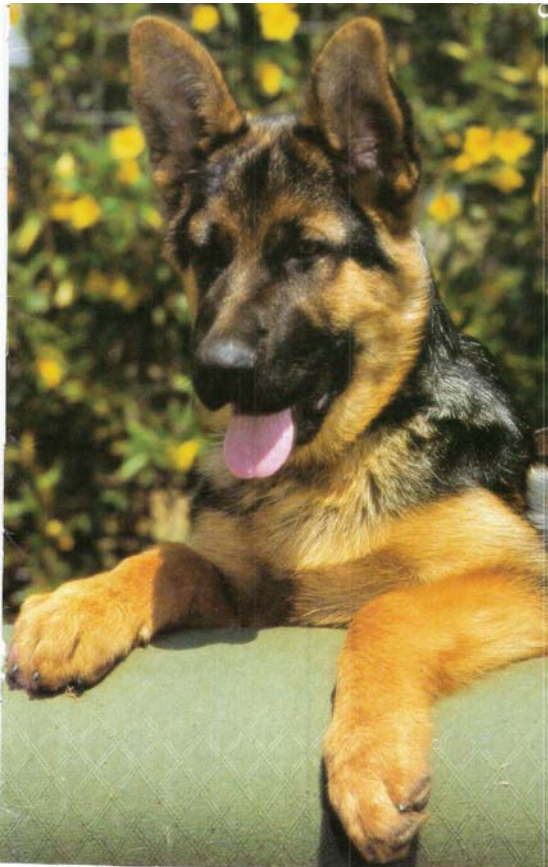
THE FIRST FEW NIGHTS

This is another instance where a little preparation will help. Hopefully, you have taken a couple of days off from work or school, so you were able to spend several hours with him getting him used to his new environment. We suggest having the puppy's sleeping area next to your bed so he feels your presence, and you can reach out to touch and comfort him. The little guy is lonely. He misses his family so expect some separation crying. We like to use a closed crate with a little blanket and a safe toy. Some people have asked us to send a towel with the scent of the littermates. They say this helps, so you might give it a try. We have also used the ticking clock but really have not had much luck with this. Make sure puppy has gone to the bathroom before you put him to bed. Expect to get up once or twice during the night to comfort him or let him out to relieve himself.

A puppy really does not have bladder control until 12 weeks of age at the minimum so he might have an accident in his crate. We will talk more about this later, but just keep in mind that at this tender age he cannot help himself. When you gotta go, you gotta go.

You really want to minimize the separation anxiety as much as possible. If you stick him in the garage or another room and wear earplugs, you might be creating a long-term problem, which could manifest itself in the future by excessive barking and destructiveness. This is a subject on which there is a different opinion from everyone that you ask.

If you have selected a location other than your bedroom for puppy's permanent sleeping area, it is probably not a good idea to keep him in your bedroom for more than a few days. But again, be prepared for a little squawking when you place him in his new sleeping quarters. After a few days, he should settle down and give you some rest.



FEEDING

This is another subject that will yield a different opinion from everyone that you ask. We'll give you some suggestions. There are some excellent dog foods on the market, and we suggest you feed a very high quality food. Some people say chicken based is the best, and other people say lamb based is the best. Still others strongly advocate a raw diet.

Bottom line is getting a high quality puppy food and see if your puppy does well on it. If you experience loose stools, poor coat, etc., and you have ruled out other problems, try

another food. We suggest you do not go hopping around from one food to another. If you find a quality food that your puppy enjoys, and he is doing well on it, stay with that food.

DO NOT GET YOUR PUPPY OVERWEIGHT! DO NOT FREE FEED!

It is imperative that you do not have an overweight puppy. You need to feed enough for him to comfortably move through his growing periods, but you absolutely do not want to feed too much. Our veterinarian has told us that you should not be able to see the ribs, but you should be able to feel them easily.

We think this is a good rule of thumb. But, it is not as easy as you think with a growing puppy. One day he looks fat so you cut down the food. You look at them in a couple of days, and the ribs and backbone are poking out. You really have to watch him closely since he is growing at an incredible rate. Studies have indicated that overweight is a contributing factor towards hip dysplasia.

We get a lot of questions on how often you should feed. We recommend feeding puppies 3 times a day until they are 6 months old. We realize that in many situations, this is not possible, as you are unable to be there during the middle of the day to feed. If this is the case, feed twice daily, a.m. and p.m. We continue to feed twice daily even after they have matured to adults. We just do not like giving them their entire quantity of food in one meal, and some studies have indicated that feeding twice daily is a good defense against bloat. This is another one of those controversial subjects where there are bunches of opinions.

Generally, you do not want your dog to be very active either directly before or directly after you feed. After you feed him, you need to give him at least a couple of hours at rest for the food to digest. Limiting activity before and after meals is another deterrent to bloat.

When should you quit feeding puppy food? We suggest that adult food is in order after your puppy reaches 18 months of age. You might do a little research on your own in order to decide when to switch. The issue of food is very controversial and complex, and there are extensive materials on the Internet for your perusal.

Then there is the issue of supplements. Should you or shouldn't you? We have been told that the dog food on the market these days is such high quality involving so much scientific research that supplements are not necessary. Well, maybe, but we have observed noticeable differences with some supplements. We suggest that you research this area as well. There are so many possibilities that we cannot even begin to cover them here.

Maren von der Heyde,



**Zwinger von der
Weidenstrasse
National Breed Supervisor
November, 2011**



**Let's hope that all of our puppies grow
up to have the same noble, intelligent
expression !!!**