



Dawn Ash-Bunting BSc (Hons) ABT

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Development Stages of the Dogs:

- **Newborn period** (0-2 weeks) – during this short phase the puppy mostly sleeps and suckles – *bliss!*
- **Transitional period** (2-3 weeks) – the puppy learns to walk, ears open and teeth appear. The puppy develops the ability to urinate and defecate by itself – *the hard work really begins*. As a breeder you are best to subject the puppy to mild stress as they are better to cope now than later on. Picking up the puppy every day, looking at them, subjecting them to noises like the Hoover, radio etc.
- **Socialisation period** (3-12 weeks) – this is a critical period - during this time appropriate experiences with humans and other dogs and the environment is essential. Weeks 4-5 is when puppies begin to really interact with each other – they bare teeth, growl, and chase and play prey killing (head shaking) games. The puppy begins to learn to inhibit their bite during play with littermates.
- You will have purchased your puppy generally from 8 weeks old – good breeders will have puppies that can distinguish between their sleeping area and toilet. Depending on the complexity of the environment your puppy was brought up in will be shown through its mental development. This is from an assortment of different objects – toys, cardboard boxes, use of steps etc.
- If puppies are still in the litter from week¹ 8 onwards, the hierarchy among littermates begins to be sorted out. If the puppy has gone to a new home, it will be beginning to assess its position in the new family.

- **Juvenile period** (3-6 months) – generally the puppy is still eager to please and is still learning about its place in the family. If they have already jumped up the pecking order here – they will learn their place in the pack. First stage of chewing has begun and it is essential to encourage environmental factors within your training. The puppy begins to explore further afield but always stays within range of the security of the owner or familiar territory. *The owner believes their dog as a good recall.*
- **Adolescence period** (6months-1year/18 months) – puppies become much more independent and likely to challenge authority. They reach sexual maturity; females come into heat, males hormones are surging (mounting, marking). Second stage of chewing kicks in and become a priority. Territorial behaviour begins to appear also and your ‘perfect’ recall has gone out the window as there are better things to look at on the walk. This is the most difficult time to live through and many people give up their dogs for re-homing or start seeking the advice of a professional. If you have laid down solid foundations of good behaviour up to this point, adolescence will be less warring. *Try to remember that it does not last forever!*
- **Maturity** (1 year/ 18months onwards) – The dog’s character is on the way to be formed – many bad habits/learnt behaviours are nearly perfected. Continuing with training is essential but you should now start to begin to enjoy the first of many years with your well-balanced, well-trained best friend.

Hopefully now you have a better idea and feeling of what your dog has already been through or the life stages you are going to share together. Just remember keep smiling and enjoy your training.