

Puppies are now 8 and a half weeks old. Most breeders have already said goodbye to their puppies and are planning new litters. I see lots of work left to be done before they leave my home. My puppies are still nursing once a day on Mom. This is keeping them protected through Mom's antibodies until the puppies' immune systems are better developed and ready for their own vaccinations. I will completely wean Mom and puppies at 9 weeks. Mom is going to be boarded for a couple of days to completely dry her milk. The last bit of separation is actually easier for the puppies who do not have to see her all the time. Once she comes back, she will be dry and not allow the nursing. The puppies' nursing instinct should "dry up" as well during the time that Mom is not seen, smelled or heard.

At 8 1/2 weeks, I am moving on towards the training with correction with the puppies. Many people are just starting the training phase with their new puppies, but if the breeder has failed to provide the teaching phase, it becomes a frustration for both the puppy and the family. Crate training is a prime example of this. Most breeders have either not put their puppies in individual crates at all, or have only done it a few times. People are told that crate training is the easiest way to house break a puppy, so the puppy goes into a crate. Now you have a puppy in a brand new environment, separated by his/her siblings being forced into a tiny box of isolation. The results are a stressed out, crazed puppy.

My puppies have been individually crated for several hours at a time for almost 3 weeks. It is part of their schedule. I also incorporated a new command called "Quiet puppy." My puppies understand that being in a crate is not the end of the world. This is where I have moved from teaching to training with correction. Now I give the command "Quiet Puppy". If the puppies do not settle, I have a squirt bottle of mostly water with a tiny bit of vinegar. They do not like the squirt bottle. Noticed that the squirt bottle only came out after several weeks of teaching. Since the puppies understand that whining and having hysterics is not going to get them what they want, but instead a nasty squirt, they actually settle themselves down. I give one command, allow them the choice to follow it. If they settle, they are praised, if not, they are corrected. All the puppies understand "Quiet Puppy". I can even have them together in an x-pen and be in the same room with all the other dogs out in the room, and they will be quiet. This command will be very useful for teaching puppies not to bark excessively outside or at the door. It is also useful because when there is a bit of whining after the puppy has settled for a while, it means the puppy actually may have to potty, and not just want to leave the crate.

This week, everyone received their microchip. Unfortunately I didn't take any pictures of the actual microchip being implanted, but since we were at the store for a few hours, puppies received lots of love and attention. We had both men and women as well as boys and girls holding puppies and carrying them around. Everyone commented on how well behaved and friendly the puppies were. No one was shy, and most everyone wagged their tails happily.

Star is still my smallest puppy by .02 ounces. He and Dolly are almost identical. The only way to tell them a part is their gender, and Star's coat is just a bit thicker and woollier. He refuses to be the butt of any of his sisters' jokes. He thinks he is the biggest one out there, and will often have a sister by the tail and be dragging her around. He is and Neige are most happy when they are being held.

Neige thinks he's the smallest puppy, although at 4 pounds 8 ounces, he is almost twice as big as anyone else. He is a very happy calm boy who does like his drama if he doesn't get his way. He was the main reason we have the "Quiet Puppy" command. After being squirted a couple of times, he has decided that drama is not the best way to go, and will willingly take his nap or go into his area. He is the only puppy demanding to get up on the couch. He loves to sit cuddle with my husband while my husband watches t.v. I have a feeling that even when he is full grown, he will enjoy being held and cuddled.

Coco is my second largest puppy at just over 3 pounds. It's interesting to see her development from shy wall flower to dominant girl. She is quite stubborn, and loves to be outside. I will call her to come in, and she routinely runs the other direction. When I pick her up, she bats her eyes and gives me a wiggle and lick. She is trying to manipulate me into thinking she is adorable. Of course she is, but I don't train on adorable!

Dolly is Star's double. It is so difficult to tell them both a part. She is a little more compliant than Star, and will actually try to do the right thing. Unless she is in the middle of sister/brother tussle. When I call them to come inside, she is usually one the first ones to come. She really wants to please you. She loves having her belly rubbed, and will sit upside down in my arms as I rub it.

Pali is a perfect example of a middle child. For the longest time, she was the dominant one. She wouldn't listen and often would go "rogue" and run away. Now she is calming down and is right down the middle. She loves people. When people were holding her, she was happily wagging her tail. She is always looking for new adventures. The old Pali still comes out occasionally when I want her to come inside. She just loves be outside. She has also taught her siblings to dig holes. I am now running around the puppy play yard with powdered Cayenne pepper and putting into the holes. The pups take a little sniff and leave it alone.