

Now the fun begins! The girls are up and walking around. All of a sudden, the world has become smaller. Zsa Zsa, Lana and Audrey have all figured out how to climb out of the crate. The lip of the crate is about 2 inches high. I have a stuffed animal next to it, and a ramp down the other side. The puppies have to climb up onto the toy, step over onto the ramp and walk down. It takes quite a bit of dexterity. Ava could do it, if she wanted to, but she is very happy to snuggle next to her brother.

This week we took a giant step in training. It is hard to believe, but puppy brains are developing quickly, and they are already starting to learn things. Now that they are walking, I am working on house training. The puppies are taken out every 2 hours starting at 6 am and ending at 10 pm. They are taken out once during the night at 2 am.

With house training, they are also learning several commands. The first command is "Time to Get into the Basket". I have a large laundry basket with a sheet in the bottom. This is how I transport the puppies from their area to the potty area. It is especially helpful during the 2 am shift. It keeps everyone together, and I can quickly transport them to the outside potty area.

Although they have only been doing this for a couple of days, the girls are already recognizing the command. I tell them "Time to get into the basket" and there are squeals of delight and their tails start wagging. Even from a dead sleep, they will wake up and react in a very happy way.

The second command is the "go potty" command. Puppies do not want to urinate or defecate in their area. Mama cleans up after them in the early weeks, but as everyone is growing quickly, she isn't as efficient. Taking everyone out every 2 hours establishes a routine for the puppies digestive tract. Amazingly enough, the puppies are quickly learning the command "go potty". Once they are taken outside onto the grass. Part of the success is rooted in the puppies' natural instinct to potty on a different surface. By taking them from their crate, to the basket, to their grassy potty area, they do not have a chance to learn to potty anywhere else but on the grass. Believe it or not it is Audrey who is learning the fastest with "go potty". As soon as she is taken out of the basket and set down on the grass, she potties. All of them are starting to understand the command and will soon be sleeping through the night. It usually takes about 2 weeks. They will easily sleep from 10 pm to 6 am. Already Zsa was whining to go outside to potty. Once I didn't get to her fast enough, and there was a potty in the crate. I was pleased that she told me.

Here in central Oklahoma there could be up to 7 inches of rain over the next week. In order to continue with the house training. I bought a small bit of sod which I put on some cardboard and finally onto a plastic tray. The sod was placed on the covered part of the porch. This whole day it has rained, but house training has continued every two hours. The sod is wet and a bit muddy, plus when the wind blows, some of the rain does come on to the porch. It is a wonderful teachable moment. It is teaching everyone that even in inclement weather, everyone potties out in the grass. Another positive with this type of training is when they grow a bit older, I can place the sod in their pen, if I have to be gone for more than a couple of hours. They will still use the sod, and not have an accident in their pen.

Phantom is doing very well. He so wants to be with his sisters. He just turned 16 days old. His eyes are just starting to open, but he is desperately trying to stand up and walk around. I have

taken him outside a couple of times during the warm times of the day, but he is still too little to start consistent house training. He definitely knows when his sisters are outside without him, he starts wailing and calling for them. Ava especially keeps close watch over him. It will be interesting to see how he handles crate training.

Zsa Zsa is growing like a weed. She is the largest and the boldest. She is consistently outside the crate. Walking up and down the ramp does not seem to be an issue with her. She is still quite mouthy. I have a smaller crate next to the large whelping crate. It is where I feed May Day, and where I put Phantom in with her for extra nursing time. Both are wire crates so Zsa Zsa can see into the other crate. When her May is in the second crate, it is not unusual for Zsa Zsa to bark at her. She is even teaching Audrey and Lana to bark. Zsa Zsa enjoyed being outside more than the actual experience of being in mud. It was the excitement of something new. You could see her little brain exploding as she was sniffing all around the area, and the cinder blocks that were next to her. She is going to be a girl who loves to be out and about.

Ava is such a quiet girl. She enjoys cuddling with her brother, and doesn't seem to care much about the world around her. When she is outside, she explores around, but actually likes to stay close to me. If she goes a bit too far, she looks for me or for her sisters to come find her. She is a bit of a priss, like her Mama. She is not too fond of the wet grass. Everyone else is enamored with the mud and wet, but Ava keeps wrinkling her nose and looking for drier areas. It is a good thing she is being taught young to potty outside in the wet. She could be a bit stubborn as she grows older.

Lana is starting to come out of her shell. She likes to follow Zsa Zsa around. It is not unusual for her to be outside the crate. Outside, she and Audrey are the ones who are off exploring. She is not as bold as Zsa Zsa, but she definitely is more confident than she was last week. Lana is very curious about mud. She hasn't made an opinion of it as of yet. She is okay to potty in wet grass, but it is definitely not a first choice.

Audrey is growing in brain, just not in size, She is my petite monster. She is half the size of her siblings, but that doesn't stop her. Zsa Zsa was barking at Luna to play with her. Luna was completely ignoring her, but Audrey ran over and was barking right back! Zsa Zsa wasn't interested in playing with Audrey, and walked away, but the whole time Audrey was barking and trying to engage with her. Audrey is still more independent than any of the other pups, and she is responding more quickly to the "go potty command". Mud is a delicious distraction to Audrey. It was fun to stick her face into it, it was fun to walk in it, and it was fun to stand in it. Audrey is going to be a dirty farm dog. She lit up like a firefly when introduced to it.