

Can you believe how quickly the puppies are growing. The girls are 4 and a half weeks old, and Phantom just turned 3 weeks old. It is so much fun watching them as everyone starts to mature and grow in confidence. Even Phantom is starting to come out of the newborn puppy phase. His eyes are open, and he is standing up and walking around.

This week I brought out the "adventure box." It is a 3 foot cube made out of pvc pipe. I tie string across it and dangle all sorts of objects from the string. The purpose is to teach the puppies to be unafraid of objects swinging by their heads, and different noises by their ears. I use wooden circles, large plastic serving spoons, small metal chains, plastic cups, little metal balls that jingle, and various types of other objects. As the puppies walk through the box, the objects sway and gently hit their bodies. The metal clangs, the bells jangle and the wood thumps together. The puppies play with all the objects and are no longer fearful of different noises. It also helps with "hand shyness". Since so many objects are higher than they are (the puppies will grow taller), the puppies become accustomed to different shadows and objects swinging by and above their heads. No more shy puppies.

I am also working on different types of flooring. In the puppy area, the puppies have a soft plastic mat, (It is a preschool mat that is put together like a large jigsaw). In another part of their area, there is tile, I also have a whelping carpet, and a plastic tarp. Included with all of these surfaces is also a large sheet, and their crate area. All in all there are 5 distinctly different surfaces for the puppies to walk across and over. Not only does this teach the puppies dexterity, but it also allows them to experience new things and feelings within a safe environment. I am trying to give them as much freedom to explore and experience new sensations as possible. Those 5 surfaces are only in their area, the puppies are also being taken outside to the grass where they are learning potty and other sensations.

Potty training is coming along slowly. My life is segmented into 2 hour intervals during the day. I am becoming really good at time management. Last week I introduced a piece of sod to help with training the puppies during the heavy rains we are experiencing. I haven't decided if this was successful or not. Each litter has strengths and weaknesses. This litter does not like getting their feet wet. Although the pups were using the sod to defecate, they really didn't like using it to urinate. I was pleased to see that the puppies would stand next to the sod and go, they just wouldn't get onto the sod. Ironically, the puppies and I would go out into the rain, or onto the wet grass, and they were okay with that. I believe it was the combination of wet and perhaps the smell. So, the sod is outside right now "taking a break". I am using astro turf in its place. My ultimate goal is to have 2 pieces of sod. One would stay outside and one inside. As needed, the sod would be swapped to "give it a break" and some sun. Unfortunately, everyone was out of sod at the moment. As soon as more comes in, I will be setting it back up into the whelping area.

As you look at the pictures, you may see staining around some of the girls' eyes. It is due to the fact that teeth are now popping through. As the puppies go through hormonal changes, it is not uncommon for tear staining to occur. Puppy teething and heat cycles are the predominant problems. Once the teething ends, the staining will end.

Phantom's eyes are now open. I believe his eyes and his vocal cords are attached! Now that he can see, it is even more frustrating for him to be unable to keep up with his sisters. It is not unusual to hear a squeal of anger. There is poor Phantom with a sister on top of him wrestling with him, or pulling his tail. He is really learning how to growl. The sisters just don't seem to care. I keep telling him that he will get big like his sisters, and then he can jump on top of them! He is a very curious pup. I put out some boxes to climb or to use as tunnels. He was the first to try to climb through the tunnel. He got about half way, became nervous and backed out. As he matures, he will do better.

Zsa Zsa is becoming a love bug. When we go outside, she is the one who is staying close to me. She isn't afraid; she just likes to sit on my shoes. She gives marvelous kisses. Her newest trick is to climb out of the basket. She has learned to hook her feet into the holes in the basket, and climb up and over. More than once I have found her out wandering around after I set the basket down. She wants to be with people, not confined.

Ava is really coming out of her shell both in confidence and in structure. She is a beautiful dog. She used to be a wall flower. She would sit and wait to see what Zsa Zsa was doing, and then mimic it. Now she has found her own voice. She is quite happy to explore off on her own. I have even had to go fetch her as she wanders out into the yard. Whatever fear of the unknown she had, has disappeared.

Lana too is maturing quite nicely. She is getting a bit of a pill streak in her. She used to be the "baby sitter" for Phantom, now she likes to tease him. When all of the puppies come out to go potty, the girls go quickly. Phantom is still getting his bearings. Lana likes to finish going potty, and then go and jump on Phantom. I am often telling her to leave her brother alone and let him potty. She thinks that Phantom is her own personal play toy. At night she snuggles up with him as if nothing had happened during the day. Phantom is dying for the day when he can stand up to her and defend himself.

Audrey is still the little go getter and adventurer. I take everyone out to a side area to potty, but they are not in the same area that the older cots stay. The adults stay on the porch with an iron fence leading into a large area where they can potty. Audrey has found a way to get up to the porch and say hi to everyone. Her tail is wagging a mile a minute. She is my social butterfly. I often have to pick her up and bring her back to the group because she will forget to go potty. She wants to play with the adults. They are ten times her size, but she does not care, she is sassy and full of attitude.