

Wow how time flies! I have no idea where June went, and now we are coming into the 2nd week of July. The puppies are maturing rapidly and those personalities are starting to emerge. This week we continued with potty training. I was unable to obtain any sod. Due to the heavy rain and high demand, it just isn't available. No worries, it just means I have to be more diligent in taking puppies outside. Now that both litters have their heads up and are walking well, everyone is loaded in a basket and taken outside together every 2 hours. 8 puppies in one laundry basket is a sight to behold. It reminds me of piling all the siblings and friends up into the family station wagon. Inevitably someone complains that they are being touched, or looked at, or annoyed in all sorts of different capacities. Well in the basket, the puppies are grumbling about the same things. "He's sitting on me", "She's biting me", "He scratched me", on and on they complain. Basically the basket is too small for 8 puppies. I'm going to have to find an alternative mode of transportation.

This week we worked on car travel. We had several field trips that we took for socialization. The first trip happened on Monday evening. One of my show dog puppies from a previous litter had been staying with me for a few months. We were training her and working with some of her show skills. On Monday, she went back home. Choo's puppies went with me on the 20 minute drive. It is so important to teach puppies early about riding in the car. Nothing is more miserable to the puppy or those riding in the car with the puppy, than car sickness. Car sickness usually develops when the puppy is stressed. Once that feeling of nausea happens, it is very difficult to teach the puppy to relax in the car. The sickness and the car become synonymous and a vicious cycle starts. Bringing puppy at an early age, develops happy relaxed feelings in the car.

The second field trip was to a friend's home. She has 5 children. This was an excellent opportunity for the puppies to be handled by "little people". My son is grown, so there are no children in my home. It is so important to have these puppies exposed to different ages, nationalities and genders. Everyone had so much fun loving on puppies and passing them around. The youngest child was 4, the eldest was 16. Everyone was amazed at how calm and happy the puppies were. No one was frightened or aggressive. In fact, most of the time they just snuggled down and went to sleep in the children's arms.

Our final social test was when the family came to town for the holidays. This was a great test for the puppies on many fronts. First of all, learning to go potty while there was noise distractions. During the early evening, before the main fireworks started happening, we took everyone out to potty. You could hear the explosions and popping sounds in the distance. I was very proud of how resilient the puppies were to the noise. It is so nice not having to deal with dogs with severe noise anxieties. I have 2 dogs with this issue, and it is not easy during this time of year.

Duke is becoming more confident each day. When I take him outside, he potties quickly and then looks for the nearest shady spot. He is not at all afraid to be by himself and to explore. When it comes time to go back inside, I count all of the puppies and it is usually Duke that is missing. He is off exploring his world. He loves to see new things and is happy to try new challenges.

Victor is my snuggle bunny. He believes he is an accessory. Victor loves to be held and have his tummy rubbed. When everyone is out and about, Victor is usually right by me waiting to be

picked up. I bet when he is full grown, he will still want to be carried around and hugged everyday.

Jack continues to be my social butterfly. He has to be involved in everything that anybody is doing. If he is by himself, he will whine and bark about it. He thinks he is missing something. He and Duke are still the first ones to come greet me in the morning. He also is the first one to complain when in the basket. He loves to be in the middle of everything, but not under everything! He has a comment about everything. He will be learning the "quiet puppy" command very soon.

Opie is my little instigator. He enjoys teasing and taunting the other puppies. Now that both litters are playing together, it is his joy in life to pick on the younger smaller puppies. This worked fine for him until the smaller puppies learned to gang up on him and bring him down. It really frosts him when he tries to tease a puppy, and its' sibling comes to the rescue. He is learning to not be quite a bully and to play nicely.

Queen is starting to come out of her shell. For the longest time, Queen kept to herself on the bed, while the brothers played around her. This past week she had a growth spurt, and is now almost their size. If the brothers get in her face, she yells and pushes them right back. She is not backing down. She has decided that the world needs a female's touch, especially with such rowdy brothers, and she is the one to do it.

Starting this week, I will begin the weaning process. The pups are already eating the food out of mom's dish. I now just want to make sure that we can smoothly transition . Teeth have erupted, and Momma Choo is starting to becoming irritated at the little razors on her nipples. Generally it takes 3-4 weeks to completely wean the puppies. I gradually increase their food while decreasing the amount of time spent nursing. Choo has already decided not to sleep with them at night. Within the next week and a half they will only be nursing twice a day. As I stated earlier, they are quickly growing, and this is the next step.