

Puppies will be 6 weeks old on Tuesday. I only have them for 6 more weeks. This is the half way point, and I see how much is left to done. Last week was their first foray into adulthood. Much like humans, puppies have to be taught to be civilized canines. The earlier manners are taught, the happier and better behaved the puppies will be.

Our first step into adulthood was to start the "sleep through the night" routine. For the past week, puppies were put to bed at 8:15 pm. At 10:00, they were taken out for a potty break, at 2:00 an additional potty break was taken, and finally at 6:00 am, they started their day. They are doing really well. With 8 puppies in a single large crate, I have only had 2-3 potty accidents, usually between 2-6 am. Last night, I didn't get up at 2:00, and we had the same amount of potty accidents. I believe it to be the younger pups. They are a week younger, and still are developing their bladder habits. I will keep working on it.

Our next big step was learning to be in a crate all by ourselves. The best way to crate train a puppy, is to utilize it's nap time. After everyone comes in from playing, I put everyone in his or her own crate. At this time, I have 6 crates and 8 puppies, so 2 are put together. Puppies are rotated everyday so that everyone is in a different crate. Jack has the hardest time with crate. He just can't understand what the purpose of being by oneself. One must always have a buddy to hang out with or to play. This is a very good exercise to teach. It will be a great help in reducing any type of separation anxiety. I take 2 hours a day and have everyone "take a nap" in a crate.

Finally, I am starting on the weaning process. Puppies nurse on Choo first thing in the morning, dinner time and bed time. I have replaced the noon feeding with puppy mush weaning stuff. Basically it is ground up puppy food with goat's milk. The younger puppies still nurse on May all 4 times, but they too enjoy eating the puppy food when it is available.

Puppies are also discovering adult things on their own. Puppies are drinking from a water bottle. The first couple of sips resulted in surprised puppies as the water came into their face. Now it is just fun and refreshing to get a drink of water after playing outside.

Jack is really the ham of the group. He can't think of any reason why he shouldn't be held or be in the center of attention. He adores playing with his siblings and also the older dogs. It is not unusual to see him running from one end of the porch to the other, often sliding and falling over when he misses the turn. He has never had a bad day, except when crated. He is a drama king. I am working on that!

Duke has become the dominant leader of the group. He is the biggest puppy, he has the biggest personality. He is the first strike out on his own into a new area of the yard. He yells the loudest if knocked over on his back. It is a yell of indignation. He plays the hardest and loves to be on top. He is the alpha male.

Opie's personality continues to develop. Last week, he was the instigator of the group. He would bully the younger ones until they ganged up on him. Now he is mellowing out. He still enjoys a good game of wrestle, but more and more he is finding himself at the bottom of the pile, usually with Duke on the top. He is a good listener and is learning his name. He loves to be held and have his belly rubbed. He is a great middle of the road pup.

Victor is Duke junior, but without his larger than life personality. Victor is softer than Duke. He watches what Duke does, and then mimics it. He really enjoys being carried. He considers himself an accessory. Personally he is my favorite at the moment. I just love his soft happy personality.

Maggie (aka Queen) has arrived to challenge the superiority of her brothers. More than once she has pushed Jack over and stood on him while he wriggles and growls. When the food bowl goes down, Maggie is the first jump in, and does not allow anyone to squeeze her out. She embodies her Mother, Choo. She has brains and personality. She is not a wall flower, but she is not hyper either.

This week the puppies and I went on several field trips. We went to friends house where both boys and girls held the puppies, as well as different nationalities. Although it may seem odd, but different nationalities have different smells to dogs. That is why it is so important to have as many people as possible handle them. We also had the opportunity to spend some time at a Texas rest stop where the puppies were handled by an Asian family, a Hindi family, Caucasian family, and an African American family. It was exhausting but great fun for the puppies and the people involved. Everyone likes training puppies.