

## 8 to 16 Weeks

### Be Proactive not Reactive!

- Expect a fear period
  - Puppies are very sensitive to traumatic experiences and a single scary event may be enough to traumatize a puppy, potentially causing life-long effects on future behaviors. They may gradually become more and more fearful of situations they once appeared to be accepting of. The fear also may be manifested by overly cautious behaviors where the puppy approaches people or items tentatively or defensive behaviors involving barking/lunging/growling. This is stage where owners should be conscious of their puppy's body language when they may be more apt to perceive certain stimuli as threatening.
- Duckling phase
  - Follows closely to owner without wandering too far due to uncertainty. This is just a phase and will change as puppy ages.
- Socialization is crucial!
  - Socialization to new people, animals, places and things
  - Quality over Quantity—fewer quality experiences are significantly better than frequent, poor experiences
  - Never force the puppy into a situation it isn't willingly wanting to enter!
  - Critical socialization window closes at 16 weeks
  - **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL PUPPY IS OLDER TO SOCIALIZE!**
- Balance between exposure and handler focus
  - Goal is acceptance not obsession
  - Teach your puppy to be calm and comfortable in new situations, not fixated on people, dogs or other animals
- Don't be afraid to seek the help of a professional trainer to make sure you are on the right track with your puppy! It is better to be well prepared from the start than to wait until negative behaviors pop up later on!

