Puppy Start Right Preschool: Handling Experience

Marking

Choose a “mark” word like yes or good or use a clicker. The mark occurs as your puppy is doing a behavior and is always followed immediately by a reward. The mark is a special word or sound that your puppy recognizes as “I just did something good” and then a treat happens which is good reward.

Training Exercises

Recall

- Say puppies name
- Second puppy acknowledges name take a few steps away from puppy,
- As puppy moves toward you say your recall word “come” in a happy tone while moving away from puppy.
- Make it fun for your puppy to chase you, run to you, play tug when they get to you, sniff out treats or sniff bushes in your back yard.
- Also, you can present your hand target as puppy is moving toward you and reward for running up and touching your hand.
- Remember and praise happily as puppy is moving toward you!

The goal of any recall word is to make it fun so your puppy wants to recall to you from distraction.

Canine Enrichment for Mealtimes

Use unique and different ways to feed your puppy. In class puppies sniffed out treats while in a sled full of plastic balls. This is a great way for puppies to experience something new while using their nose. Think of all the items you could use in your home to teach nosework while checking new objects out.

Handling

Practice daily with short sessions

Step 1: Treat During Touch

- The first steps prevents puppy from putting their mouth on your hand as you reach to touch.
- Plan the sessions when your puppy is calm.
- Show puppy treat and as puppy eats place hand on body parts gently saying yes or good calmly.
- Remove hand as treat is eaten.
- Repeat touching different body parts gently.

- Back, side, shoulder, head, chin, paws, leg, neck, rear, ear, etc.

Step 2: Touch then Treat

- The second step teaches puppy a treat will come after hand is touching their body.
- Reach out calmly and touch body parts gently then calmly, say “yes” or “good” and bring a treat out.
- Add duration of the touch and pressure at puppies’ level of comfort.
- If puppy moves to mouth your hand with any body part go back to step 1.

Step 3: Touch & Eye Contact

- The second step adds eye contact and builds duration.
- Reach out at touch and pause.
    - If puppy looks at you say “yes” or “good” and treat.
    - If puppy does not look at you, make a happy noise to draw eyes to yours, say “yes” or “good” and treat.

Adding Equipment to Handling

Short handling exercises. Puppies may love their experience at the vet now and we want it to stay that way. By continuing handling exercises and practicing positions daily with your puppy you will set your puppy up for success.

Vaccinations

- Use a pencil to practice the act of giving a vaccination.
- Give puppy peanut butter, liver or cheese spread on a surface (lick it mat).
- Touch loose skin area on puppies’ neck and place pencil on the area for practice.

Restraint

- Help puppy learn to be restrained for 1 second to 20 seconds.
- Lightly put your arm under belly and through front legs and treat while in restraint,
- Increase time with puppy’s acceptance.
- When puppy is comfortable with restraint add the pencil onto the leg as if taking blood.
- Puppy needs to learn to hold still for a blood draw.
- You could use a helper to feed peanut butter during process or apply peanut butter to a surface that will not detract from practice blood draw.

Teeth

- Practice massaging teeth with finger or a rubber toothbrush for puppies.
- Start by placing cheese or peanut butter so puppy enjoys the taste.
- As puppy is feeling you rub it onto their teeth, lift muzzle.

Laying on Side & Back

- Practice teaching puppy to lay on each side for duration.
- Lure puppy with a treat from a down to follow a treat with their head until they are on their side.
- Practice with duration with peanut butter or another lickable treat.
- The exercise is not meant to be a restraint exercise.
- Can you massage their hip, thigh, knee and foot including inside the pad and nails (puppies should be comfortable with the handling exercise for this).
- Press on the nail beds, put slight pressure on body parts.
- Help puppy to want to roll onto back.
- Slowly take their front and back legs and do the bicycle.

Ears

- Practice massaging the ears.
- Never use a que-tip to clean ears.
- Instead massage ear with a cotton ball slowly.
- Let puppy lick peanut butter while massaging ear.

Nails

- Practice pressing with zero to slight pressure on nails.
- Show puppy a nail file.
- Give peanut butter on a surface and touch each nail with the file.
- Add slow and slow pressure.
- Talk to your vet to determine if they suggest nail clippers or Dremel.

**As with any exercise if your puppy is uncomfortable or growls contact your trainer.*