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PUPPY GUIDANCE SHEET

MOUTHING

Puppies investigate the world around them using their mouths and this can prove to be a painful time for us humans! They'll attempt play by mouthing us just as they would their litter mates and will also experience discomfort whilst going through TWO teething stages which can also cause them to be more 'mouthy'.

It's important to note this is a perfectly normal phase and not one we can change or stop from happening. But we 'can' do things to make this easier on ourselves and help our puppies learn more appropriate things to mouth!

Re-direction

Don't be scared to engage your puppy in play and tug games etc, but have a variety of toys and different textures that you can direct him too to chew and gnaw on instead of your hands! In fact teaching them to direct their mouthing to toys helps them enjoy this and learn the things they can chew on.

Learn the triggers!!!

Sometimes an over tired puppy can be extra mouthy and nippy, or one which has become over excited. Perhaps you've just arrived home, initiated play, a visitor has arrived etc. All of which can trigger mouthing and nipping! Learn to re-direct where possible, or when needs be, initiate a consequence such as a short time out with ZERO attention at all in his crate! This will help your puppy begin to associate mouthing and nipping 'you' with all attention being removed. This in itself is a huge punishment (albeit not an awful or aversive one!)

Remove temptations -

Long house coat cords, slippers, flappy trouser legs... all of these can look hugely enticing to a puppy! For a short time, do all you can to 'control & manage' the situation and remove temptation until this stage is over.

How to handle this with small children!!

Small children can be a worry around puppies in general as they learn what is right and wrong and outgrow the mouthing stage! Children can also inadvertently increase the risk of this behaviour continuing as they are more likely to wave their arms around and run around to get away from the puppy, which in effect, turns it into the best game ever!!!! Being there to supervise as much as possible and intervene when needs be is crucial until you get past this period.

As with adults, IF your puppy is becoming too much, too bitey etc, then play MUST STOP! A short time out in a crate or another room etc until the puppy is again calm and then play can begin again calmly!

Each and every time the puppy takes it too far, you must consistently introduce and follow through with the consequence.

ZERO attention, no eye contact no speaking to him. NADA!

High pitched squeals and 'Ouches' can in fact trigger more excitement in the puppy so its best to simply say 'enough' and end play.

Even a stair gate to place the puppy behind this and away from the humans can be a tool which can be handy for this training.

I have always still allowed 'Gentle mouth play' in all of my own dogs and see this is a good way in which to help them differentiate mouthing which is OK and mouthing which is too much.

Puppies learn bite inhibition from their mother and litter mates. In some cases where puppies are taken from there too soon (before 8 weeks) this can mean they have not fully learned all they should and can create more issues ongoing.

Helping your puppy realise what is OK (soft mouthing, hands / fingers in mouth but no biting/ pain etc) and what is not (pain, drawing blood, nipping hard etc) is crucial to his learning and development.

A second teething stage can occur around 12-18 months of age as the adult teeth settle into the jawbone when the dog is fully grown but this usually see's your dog decide to chew 'things' again more than people!

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