

# Introductory Course for USDA Licensed Dog Breeders

## Part 6: Socialization for Healthy Dogs





# Learning Objectives

You should now be able to:

1. Describe proper socialization of dogs
2. Recognize signs of inadequate socialization of all ages
3. Describe how to provide socialization for breeding dogs and puppies
4. Understand the importance of working with a veterinarian to ensure adequate socialization
5. Explain why raising socialized puppies can improve welfare and promote your kennel
6. Describe what can be done to positively impact adult breeding dog behavioral health and socialization



# Socialization: A Best Practice

***“Socialization is good for the puppies,  
good for the future owners of these pets and  
good for the kennel industry, but it is not a  
regulatory requirement.”***

*Animal Care Tech Note:*

*Puppy Socialization*

*September 2013*



# Socialization Video

Before we go through this presentation, please view this short video about Socialization of dogs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wVdOcWyYRc>



# Socialization for Healthy Dogs



# Meeting Socialization Needs

- Socialization: process by which puppies learn skills needed to mature into normal adults
- Proper socialization requires meeting needs
  - Mental
  - Behavioral
  - Physical
- Wide variety of psychological needs determined by individual factors
  - Genetic makeup
  - Personality type
  - Prior socialization and experiences



# Inadequate Socialization

- Problems occur with inadequate socialization
- Improper socialization and prolonged confinement may lead to stereotypic behaviors:
  - Spinning
  - Pacing
  - Excessive licking of paws or legs
  - Excessive barking
  - Fearfulness/aggression



# Socialization Programs

- Socialization and behavioral health can be improved by programs developed with a veterinarian
- These programs may include:
  - Socialization strategies
  - Enrichment opportunities (e.g., toys, play structures, music)
  - Exercise plans

# Socialization Practices

- Provide dogs with regular
  - Social contact
  - Mental stimulation
  - Physical activity
- Dogs develop abnormal behaviors when stressed
  - Social companionship
  - Mental stimulation
  - Exercise





# Puppy Socialization



# Socialization Definition

- Proper socialization allows puppies to:
  - Explore and become accustomed to their surroundings
  - Learn how to get along with other humans, dogs, and other animal species

*Only through proper socialization can puppies become loving, confident and trainable pets*

# Breeder Socialization Role

- Breeders who properly socialize their puppies
  - Make a positive investment in their business
  - Provide owners with healthy, well-adjusted pets





# Importance of Socialization

- Raising social, healthy, and trainable puppies is better for animals' welfare
- Can effectively promote your kennel and increase sales
- Failure to properly socialize puppies may lead to lifetime behavioral problems



# Improper Socialization Risks

- Animal is often abandoned or relinquished to shelter, unhappy customer may never acquire another pet
- Unhappy customers may share their negative experiences with friends and family, hurting the dog breeding industry



# How to Socialize Puppies



# Before Birth

- Puppies can be affected by the health of their mother
- Increased stress in the mother may lead to
  - Miscarriage
  - Low birth rate
  - Increased susceptibility to disease
  - Learning difficulties in puppies

# Before Birth cont'd

- Decrease stress levels in breeding dogs
  - maintain proper air quality
  - maintain proper temperature/humidity
  - avoid overcrowding
  - assure overall health of breeding dogs before breeding



# Birth to Three Weeks of Age

- Puppy isn't fully developed with immature
  - Brain
  - Spinal cord
  - Nerves
- Neurologic development can be positively influenced
- Make sure tail-docking and declawing is NOT the only handling experience
- Gently handle your puppies in a positive manner daily



# Three to Sixteen Weeks of Age

- Critical for developing social relationships with humans and other animals
- Puppy should belong to a known social group – *mother and littermates*



# Three to Sixteen Weeks of Age cont'd

- Puppies separated from mother at 4-5 weeks can have more behavioral problems than those separated at 8 weeks
- Problems may include
  - Excessive barking
  - Fearfulness
  - Destructive behavior
  - Toy possessiveness
  - Food guarding
- Last two problems above may lead to biting people





# Daily Positive Interactions

- Gently touch and pet
- Talk in a low-volume, calm voice
- Open mouth to inspect teeth, tongue, throat
- Touch all four feet
- Look inside both ears
- Gently brush

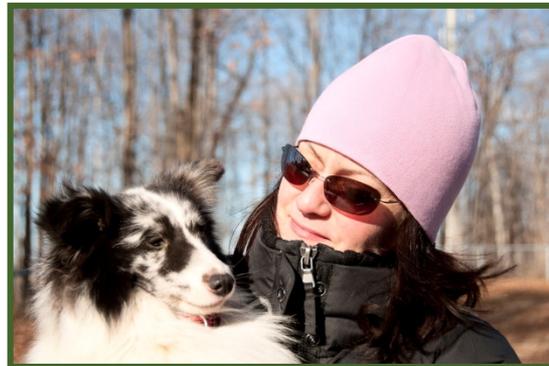
# Walking Surfaces

- Ensure puppies walk and play on different surfaces
  - Grass
  - Gravel
  - Dirt
  - Sand
  - Carpet
  - Tile



# Human Interactions

- Provide human interactions
  - Males and females of different ages
  - Appearances – people wearing hats, sunglasses, uniforms, etc.



# Canine Socialization

- Provide social interactions with dogs of different breeds and ages
- Stay within established kennel population for biosecurity





# Tips for Socialization

- Encourage positive contact with other animals
- Safely introduce your puppies to unique sounds
- Take the puppies to safe, new areas or locations on your property

# After Puppies Leave the Kennel

- Socialization will continue in new homes
- Teach house-training and basic obedience
- Teach manners
  - No biting
  - Taking proper walks
  - Riding in cars
- Educate new owners on their role in this process
  - Starts with breeder
  - Continue with veterinarian



# Success of Socialization

- Success of socialization starts at the kennel while the puppies are under your influence





# Success of Socialization cont'd

- Each stage is an opportunity for you to help improve puppies' health, quality, trainability and marketability
- A well-socialized, healthy and trainable puppy reflects well
  - Your puppies may be in greater demand



# Socialization of Breeding Dogs



# Socialization Programs

- Develop programs with attending veterinarian:
  - Exercise plans by AWA standards and regulations
  - Socialization strategies
  - Enrichment opportunities
  - Behavior modification

# Breeding Dog Activity

- Breeding dogs should be provided with regular activity:
  - Social companionship (with dogs and people)
  - Mental stimulation (enrichment)
  - Exercise





# Additional Considerations

- May require behavior modification to change abnormal behavior
- Make sure replacement breeding dogs introduced are well socialized prior to purchase
- Puppies kept as replacement breeding dogs
  - Should be well socialized
  - Exhibit a good temperament

# Breeding Dog Temperament

- Mothering instinct, temperament – highly heritable
- Keep puppies for breeding that are well socialized and exhibit the temperament that you want in your kennel





# Conclusion

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Questions?

# Acknowledgments

This presentation was prepared by the Center for Food Security and Public Health, Iowa State University through a cooperative agreement with USDA APHIS Animal Care.

