

Vaucluse Vet

Puppy-Pre School

The main aim of puppy pre-school is to improve the relationship between you & your puppy, while the primary focus of the program is to build the puppy's confidence.

- ✓ The classes are held at the Veterinary Clinic so that the pup gets used to this environment & learns to associate it as being a positive place.
- ✓ Puppy Socialisation is the most important thing you can do for your puppy. Between the ages of 8 & 16 weeks puppies have an incredibly steep learning curve & are most sensitive to environmental influences. When puppies are young, they are inquisitive & interested in new things & therefore by exposing them to new stimuli while they are having fun & open to new ideas, it will prevent behavioural problems later on in life.
- ✓ Unfortunately puppies are not born well-behaved, so another aim of the program is to lay the foundation of basic good behaviour by teaching the puppy certain behaviours, such as settle, sit, recall, drop / down, to walk on a loose lead & stay.
- ✓ Research has also shown that puppies that have been socialised in a positive manner grow into well-behaved, happy & confident adult dogs with less behavioural problems.

Format of the Class

- ✓ The concept of puppy socialising is based on learning theory, whereby good behaviour is rewarded & bad behaviour is ignored, or in some cases prevented from occurring by using a distracter. This sounds a bit theoretical but once put into practice the results are clearly evident!

Small & tasty treats are used as positive reinforcement / as a reward & are only used during training. These treats are used merely as a training aid (as puppies are usually very motivated by food!) & the use of them is gradually phased out towards the end of the program.

- ✓ We focus on the theoretical or practical side of things at the beginning of the lesson & the socialising (short off-lead play) at end of the class due to the fact that most puppies have a very short concentration span & loose focus really quickly. Obviously the best part of the class for the puppy is the socialising, so by starting with that you would find it rather challenging to try & teach your puppy anything new, as it would just want to play!
- ✓ It is important to practice at home as the class is limited to 4 one hourly sessions.

Rules of the Class

- ✓ I often refer to the classes as “puppy pre-school” so that your / owners expectations are not too high when joining the class. The classes are not formal training, but rather 4 weeks of an informative and educational “puppy party” to bridge the gap before formal training begins.
- ✓ We keep the classes fun & relaxed due to the fact that dogs can pick up on our moods.
- ✓ During the class we don't shout at, reprimand or coerce the puppies, as this results in confusion & is no fun for the owner or the puppy.

Basic Course Outline

✓ **Week 1**

Puppy handling; teaching calm behaviour; settle; focus / attention; sit; off-lead play / socialisation; toilet training & play biting discussion; weigh; admin

✓ **Week 2**

Puppy handling; settle on mat; recall; down / drop; introduction to tricks; socialisation; nutrition & environmental stimulation discussion; weigh

✓ **Week 3**

Mat training; basics of walking on a loose lead; agility / obstacle course; vet / vet nurse discussion; socialisation; leadership discussion; weigh

✓ **Week 4**

Graduation class / away class (Lyne Park): exposure to new stimuli; teaching the basics of stay; games played to display skills learnt; teaching exchange / give & take; socialisation; further training discussion; graduation

Requirements for the First Week

- ✓ Your puppy needs to come to each class with a lead & collar.
- ✓ Please feed your puppy slightly less dinner before the 1st lesson to ensure that he/she is eager to learn & more likely to focus on you!
- ✓ Please bring a mat (cushion, blanket or towel) along to the class to facilitate & encourage the teaching of 'settle' & mat training.
- ✓ Please bring your puppy's favourite toy / Kong to each lesson.