

Start training as soon as you get your puppy!

By Jarred Hodgson | 9 March 2024 | 11:00 am

There are many different opinions when it comes to training puppies. Some people say only start at six months, while others say eight months. Well, they are wrong.



If your dog is going to be an outside dog, it should be given adequate shelter outside from the start.

Photo: Supplied

Your puppy should have started training when it was with its breeder. If you adopted a puppy from a shelter, you need to start training it as soon as possible.

I am a firm believer in starting training as soon as you get a puppy. Simple, basic obedience can be started right away.

Here are seven ways to prevent a disaster when getting a new puppy.

1. **Start training as soon as you get the puppy:** Teach your puppy basic obedience from an early age. I'm not saying that as soon as you arrive home from collecting your puppy, you need to start boot camp and become a drill sergeant. Give the puppy a day or two to settle in at your home and then ease into training, starting with basic commands such as 'sit', 'down', 'stay', and 'wait [for food]'. Even consider enrolling your pup in a local puppy training class. It is well worth the effort to train your pup as much as you can now, as this will create a good bond with your dog and make your days around the farm much more enjoyable if you have a well-trained animal.
2. **Set standards and keep them:** For your puppy to settle in quickly and comfortably, you need to set standards and keep them. This means that if you don't want an adult dog on the bed or couch, do not let the puppy on the bed or couch now. If your dog is going to be an outside dog, that is where it must stay as a puppy, providing there is adequate shelter. All these things need to be considered. For example, a cute little German shepherd puppy is nice to cuddle with, but when it becomes a fully grown adult, he will end up taking most of your bed for himself.
3. **Toilet training needs to be intensive for the first few weeks:** If your puppy came from a breeder and it isn't toilet trained, you bought from a bad breeder; I'm sorry, but it's the truth. Any good breeder should develop these basics when they still have the puppies. If yours isn't toilet trained, you need to get on it as soon as possible.
4. **Socialise your puppy:** Socialising puppies from an early age is incredibly important. Many people think that socialisation is simply letting their puppies play with other puppies, but that is only a small part of it. Your puppy needs to be exposed to dogs of different ages, people, environments, noises, and smells. Make yourself a checklist or email me and I'll give you a list to go through to get that exposure with your pup. Good, positive socialisation plays a major role in well-rounded, calm dogs.
5. **Exercise your puppy correctly:** Ensure that your puppy gets the right amount of exercise; this means not over-exercising a puppy, too. It is recommended that you exercise them for five minutes per month that they have been alive. For example, if your puppy is three months old, it should be walked for 15 minutes (3×5) maximum at a time. This is obviously just a guideline, but it is important that you don't overdo it. This can result in major development issues with a dog's bones and joints. If your puppy is over-exercised it may become fearful of walking or going on a leash, because it will associate this activity with pain.

6. **Your puppy needs mental stimulation:** Not only does your puppy need exercise, but it also needs to be mentally challenged too. This helps with cognitive development and problem solving. Playing games with your pup, like hiding treats and employing doggy puzzles, will tire them out more than any walk will. Make your drives around the farm fun and engaging for your pup. Let them sniff around, and do some obedience training with them while you are out. This will tire them out mentally as well as physically.
7. **Keep a constant eye on your puppy:** Many people get puppies, play with them a little bit, and then put them in the backyard and expect them to entertain themselves. These same people then get upset when the dog starts digging holes and chewing on furniture. My question to them is always the same: what did you expect? Dogs are social animals and rely on pack mates to entertain them. If you only have one dog, you are the pack mate and you are expected to keep them busy. You need to engage with them. If you need to do something else, give them a nice big bone or toy to play with.

Farm dogs are lucky to have plenty of entertainment. So, take your pup out with you, teach it to travel calmly in the bakkie and wait there while you count your cattle.

It will bring you and your pup so much joy cruising around the farm together. The more you engage and train your pup, the fewer issues you are going to have.

You are living in a dream world if you are getting a puppy and plan on leaving it at home without it being destructive.

Puppies need to be entertained and monitored while they are awake. They are naturally inquisitive and will explore their home. Honestly, if you can't find the time for your dog, you probably shouldn't have one.

A little side note: if you are the owner or a worker at a dog shelter near the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and would like me to come and train the dogs and puppies, I'll do it for free!

Please give me a shout. We all want the best for these dogs, and having them trained would most definitely make them more adoptable.

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