

Puppies 101

Food

We have been free-feeding the puppies Purina dog food. Purina Pro Plan is our favorite. It is a good vet approved, nutritionally balanced food, as is Science Diet, Royal Canin, and Eukanuba. Your vet can definitely recommend what they feel is best too. You'll get a bag of food for a couple days to ease the transition. Once you take your puppy to the vet for their update/shots they will be able to guide you to how much to feed per day.

Training

Our favorite local trainers for puppy classes are:

Golden Paws Dog Training in Pittsboro. Michelle is fantastic and has a puppy group class as well as lots of other options as they grow.

Whole Dog Institute in Durham. They offer many puppy group classes as well as classes for adults.

Training is really essential to ensure a good relationship with your puppy. Just like kids, they want and need boundaries. Basic training, leash training, clicker training - all are useful and important to make sure your dog is a great partner and not an uncontrollable animal that you don't want to be around. Remember - all dogs go through a period where they are kind of wild velociraptors. While annoying, it's totally normal. Stay the course and remember your sweet puppy and envision the amazing dog they will become - and hang on through that rough phase.

As puppies grow and teethe, mouthing and chewing is normal. Keep it positive and redirect. Keeping a variety of chew toys around and even keeping one in your pocket to give them to redirect is helpful. Chewing is comforting to dogs.

Jumping up is another common behavior folks like to avoid. Ignoring or turning away from jumping and praise and reinforcement for your puppy having "four (feet) on the floor" can curb this behavior. Get used to having a pocket full of treats for a while!

Vetting

Your puppies need two more sets of shots, the next being 3 weeks from now. They will get their Rabies shot at 16 weeks. Vets tend to schedule fairly far out, so you may want to call and let them know you've gotten a puppy and need to get on the schedule.

Spay/Neuter

Your vet will be able to help you decide when the right time to sterilize your puppy. As part of the adoption, there is a \$150 deposit that you will get back once your pet has surgery. If you bring them to Dogwood Veterinary Hospital in Chapel Hill or Harmony Animal Rescue Clinic in Apex, the surgery will be done for free. If you choose a different clinic, you will receive your \$150 deposit back and pay the difference.

Crate Training

The puppies have begun being crate trained for short periods of time. They have had an open crate in their pen for weeks and are comfortable going in and sleeping in it. We have also been working to get them used to being in a crate for short periods. We believe crate training is good for many reasons. It's helpful for times they are ill, have surgery and need to be confined, when you need to be out of the house and need to keep the puppy safe from chewing cords, eating the drapes, etc. If they are boarded or at the vet, they will certainly be crated so they do better if they are familiar with crating.

Making the crate a welcoming place by feeding meals in there, sprinkling treats to find in an open crate throughout the day, and having high value treats for short periods with a closed door is a great start.

Remember - these next few days may be tough. Your puppy has always known a pile of snuggly siblings to play with and fall asleep. Crying in the crate is normal to some degree, but watch for distress. Puppies are babies and thrive with boundaries but also love and comfort. They may be more comfortable next to your bed in their crate or with you near them for a few days until they understand the routine and expectations. The idea of making sure their needs are met - play, potty, food, water, then rest work with puppies too.

You may also find an xpen works well to keep them contained, but gives them a space to play and rest. You can easily move them around the house and keep them in a central area so when you need to use it, puppy can see the action but stay safe.

Treats & Enrichment

Licki mats, stuffed kongs, bully sticks, training treats, even cut up cheese and meat make great treats. There are puzzle toys and snuffle mats that are great for hiding treats and keeping puppy minds busy as well. A tired puppy is a good puppy! But remember puppies get bored too. Keep it interesting by rotating toys and treats. Please research all treats and toys to ensure they are fully digestible and won't cause blockages.

Potty Training

The puppies have been working on litter training since they were 3 weeks old and are pretty proficient. They have been keeping their waste in the tray and general area (near misses!) extremely well. They have also been using the bathroom well outside.

The key to potty training is consistency and patience. They're still babies and will have accidents. Puppies do typically pee when they wake up from sleeping and poop 4 or so times a day, often after eating. Crate training can help because they typically don't want to use the bathroom where they sleep. Taking them outside immediately after they wake up and keeping them on a consistent schedule (just like a toddler!) is key.

Your puppy will need to use the bathroom in the middle of the night for a while. Puppy bladders are small and nighttime accidents may happen. Puppies are unable to hold their bladder for more than 3 hours at two months old. It will take 4-6 months for your puppy to be able to hold it overnight. Again, patience is important .

Socialization

These puppies have been exposed to handling, nail trimming, bathing, kids, cats, dogs, people, and never met a stranger. We've played with tin pans, plastic bags, crinkly toys, and listened to sudden noises, fireworks, wobble boards, and vacuums. We've tried to ensure they are well-rounded. Keep it going! Puppy socialization is not just about meeting new people, but having lots of new experiences - bikes, canes, wheelchairs, boxes- you name it. Experiencing it makes it familiar and less scary.

Puppies go through normal fear periods at around 8-11 weeks old and 6-14 months old. These are completely normal times when things that were just fine with your puppy are now suddenly scary. Help your puppy work through them gently so they can come out confidently on the other side. There's some great information about this linked on our webpage.

A note about dog parks - the idea is fun, but dog parks can be unsafe for several reasons - you don't know other dog's vaccination or health status, and there's no guarantee they have good dog to dog skills and behavior. Situations can quickly spiral out of control. Stick to planned interactions or playdates with dogs you know.

We are *always* here for questions, concerns, or feedback. Please don't hesitate to reach out at any point for what you need. We are truly here for the lifetime of your pet. The resources section of turtlepantsfarm.org is also being added to with helpful topics and infographics. Check it out!

Please also join our Facebook group, Turtle Pants Farm...Happy Tails. We LOVE updates. Fostering is truly a labor of love and we remember every pet who has come through our doors. We love to watch them grow and thrive in their forever homes!