

The Documented Case For Early Socialization

Socialization during the sensitive period from 7 to 16 weeks is critical to the development of a well-balanced, behaviourally healthy dog! The primary reason why dogs are relinquished to animal shelters is behaviour problems that arise from puppies not receiving adequate socialization and training. A shocking statistic is that at least 7-8 million animals are euthanized in US animal shelters each year for behavioural problems. This is why it is so critical to get young puppies out and about in the world.

Picture two dog-brothers from the same litter. One brother was taken out as a puppy at least once a week to a new place to meet new people and dogs. The other puppy was kept at home. A recent study conducted by Dr. Reid at the University of Guelph revealed that the socialized brother was less likely as an adult to exhibit annoying or problematic behaviour than the brother that was not socialized. Like human children, young puppies go through a series of developmental stages. The period from 7 to 16 weeks is called the socialization period. During this time, puppies are eager to explore new environments and meet new people and dogs. Research demonstrates clearly that the socialization “window of opportunity” starts to close around 16-20 weeks. After that, puppies are often wary of new things, a phenomenon called neophobia. If they haven’t had plenty of pleasant exposure to new people, dogs and situations before that age, they sometimes acquire fears and

anxieties; they may develop attachment and aggression problems. Often these problems are irreversible and the puppy is never able to achieve its potential as a companion animal.

What about the risk of disease? Young puppies are at risk for contracting infectious disease because they have not built up sufficient immunity until they receive their vaccinations. With the opportunity for early vaccinations, the dangers associated with early socialization are virtually eliminated!!

Please adopt confident, sociable puppies between 7-8 weeks of age and get them out for socialization experience with dogs AND people every day!! To quote Dr. Karen Overall VMD, PhD., “The single biggest killer of pets is not infectious disease; it is behavioural problems.”

*Schomberg Veterinary Services
P.O. Box 489
Schomberg ON L0G 1T0
905-939-2231*