



# Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group

## Puppy Curiosity – Week 5 to 7

### **The Science**

These weeks are a crucial time for the puppy's brain development. This is when puppies are at their most curious and willing to approach people, but at the same time their natural fearfulness starts to be shaped by their environment. This increase of fearfulness is a gradual process over the next couple of weeks and so now is the time to introduce all manner of sights, sounds, and people – and also more interesting toys and experiences as this will ultimately determine how well balanced the puppy will turn out as an adult.

In some more reactive breeds, this fear response and hazard avoidance starts earlier and increases rapidly. For these breeds it is important that the tasks detailed below are worked on as early in this period as possible whereas the less reactive breeds have a later onset of hazard avoidance and so you can be a bit more relaxed about these tasks.

To give you a rough idea, the hazard avoidance in the wild wolf (who shares our dogs' ancestors) starts around 19 days old. In the average dog it starts around 49 days old. For the German Shepherd Dog (one of the more reactive breeds) it starts around 35 days old and in the Labrador (one of the least reactive) it can start as late as 72 days. These are all approximate as each individual dog will be different – but it gives you an idea of how hard you are going to have to work in these two weeks!

This is also the time to start to teach the puppy to be happy on his own away from his littermates, and to bond even more to humans.

### **Suggested Tasks**

1. Put more interactive toys into the puppy pen at times when you can supervise. These can include wobbly objects, tunnels, bits of cloth to climb over or burrow under, suspended tennis balls, larger balls that can be rolled about, empty plastic bottles with some pebbles in them that will roll noisily, small boxes that can be climbed on or in, trays filled with stones or shallow water... Anything you can think of to introduce new stimuli to the puppies.

2. Once the puppies are eating solid foods happily, feed them from different bowls – plastic, metal, from your hand etc.
3. Over the next couple of weeks, try and make sure the puppy meets as many different types of people as possible – women, men, children, people with beards, hats, high heels, hoods etc – and that they have rewarding experiences to associate with them (games, treats etc).
4. Having heard all the usual household objects, it is time for him to experience them – this includes the TV, vacuum cleaners, ironing boards... anything that will form part of his life as a dog in a busy household. As always, make sure these experiences are positive. Start very slowly with these things not moving or switched on, and reward the puppy with a treat or a game for ignoring them not playing with them. Slowly you can begin to move them, switch them on at a distance etc – always going back a step if the puppy is reactive towards them.
5. On occasions, feed the puppy separately from his mum and littermates – and a little bit away from you (in a crate, behind a baby gate etc). Start to teach him that good things can happen when he is on his own. Also on occasions, feed him from your hand – he also needs to learn that having humans around his dinner is always a good thing.
6. Spend time with the puppy encouraging him to follow you, playing with him, making eye contact with him, stroking and handling him, picking him up and holding him – and generally getting him used to and enjoying human contact. Make sure all these interactions are positive for the puppy, using treats if necessary.
7. Try to take each puppy out individually to sit in the car, drive round the block, see and smell things that will be part of his daily life (traffic, trains etc). As he is unvaccinated (although will still have immunity passed to him from his mother) he should be carried but he should have all these experiences in these really important two weeks when his confidence is at its highest and his fear responses are at their lowest.

**IMPORTANT:** Always be very aware of the puppy and that he is having a good time. If he looks worried in any way, take it more slowly. Each puppy must be treated as an individual – and all this socialisation and habituation has to be fun and rewarding for him.

This is the time to start to teach the puppies to get used to wearing a light collar – only for a few minutes a day while they are thinking about other things, building it up over the next couple of weeks. Do not leave collars on when they are in a crate or play pen, or when unsupervised.

### **The 7 Week Checklist**

The puppy's early learning is nearly over – and it is time to check that you can tick as many as possible of the 7 Week boxes. These should have been done or experienced by the puppy on his own away from his mum and littermates.

While many of these things are never going to be part of a dog's new life, it does mean that he has experienced lots of different things and situations – this will mean he is less likely to be worried by unexpected situations or things that may happen in his new home as the unexpected is expected – or at least well-tolerated.

By the time he is seven weeks old he ideally should have:

1. Met 7 different types of people (examples: babies, toddlers, children, women, men, people with walking sticks, umbrellas, hats, wheelchairs....)
2. Been on 7 different surfaces (examples: newspaper, carpet, lino, concrete, grass, polished floors, vetbed, uneven ground...)
3. Played with 7 different types of toys (plush, hard, tuggy etc)
4. Heard 7 different household/natural noises (for example TV, radio, vacuum cleaner, playing children, different traffic sounds, thunder, fireworks, things been dropped, cooking timers....)
5. Been in 7 different locations – and ideally eaten in 7 different locations (different rooms (or even different parts of the room), outside on concrete, on grass, hand fed, in a car, with others, on own etc)
6. Done 7 different problem solving activities (for example climb over a step, over a blanket, go through a tunnel, get a toy from under something....)
7. Ideally been out and about to see 7 different places or things (carried to watch traffic, children in playground, vets, sat in car etc).

Mark in the Puppy Plan which of these have been done and where possible include photos (photos are the only proof the new owners has and this should be 'best practice') of these in the Puppy Plan so the new owner has a proven record of all the work that has been done with their puppy.



Irish Pet Advertising  
Advisory Group

A step forward for the safe  
advertising of pets online



[www.ipaag.ie](http://www.ipaag.ie)